



O.V. 148 251



OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 070'02 Acc. No. 615307

J76M

Jones John Paul

Madame Repertoire's Hand  
book.

30 November



OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 070.02

Accession No. G15 307

J76M  
Author JONES, John Paul

Title Modern reporter's handbook. 1949.

This book should be returned on or before the date  
last marked below.

---



## **The Modern Reporter's Handbook**

*Frederic E. Merwin*   **CONSULTING EDITOR**

**ARTICLE WRITING AND MARKETING**   *George L. Bird*

**EDITOR AND EDITORIAL WRITER**   *A. Gayle Waldrop*

**THE MODERN REPORTER'S HANDBOOK**   *John Paul Jones*

**PRACTICAL ADVERTISING**   *Harry P. Bridge*

T H E

*Modern Reporter's Handbook*

JOHN PAUL JONES

*Associate Professor of Journalism*

*University of Florida*

RINEHART & COMPANY · INC.

*Publishers · New York*

Copyright, 1949, by John Paul Jones  
Printed in the United States of America

Designed by Stefan Salter

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

# *Preface*

A few years back I heard a prominent newspaperman say that what the newspaper world needed was a good "news cookbook" that the reporter could consult for news recipes as the housewife does for her pie- and cake-making instructions.

This book is a step in that direction. The writer hopes that in these pages both the journalism student and the cub reporter can find "recipes" for the stories they are called on to write. The book can be used by the reporter in the same manner that the housewife uses her cookbook. He can "write in" special policies and principles at the ends of the various chapters. This notebook feature makes the book at once a textbook, reference book, and notebook for the reporter. The writer hopes that students will find the book useful in all of their college reporting courses and an instrument that helps them learn the routine of their first reporting or copy desk job more quickly.

The reader is urged to pay particular attention to the emphasis on the need for more readability and human interest in news. The trend today is toward news that penetrates deeper into the "why" of events and at the same time presents the findings so clearly that they cannot be misunderstood. The human interest or feature touch, the use of people in the news, is the necessary sugar-coating to get readers to read the things they should know about and understand in a democracy. People are a necessary element of the news. Just as the stage play would be dull without characters, the news story fails to live without movement of people through the lead and body.

In these pages the reporter is presented as the dignified, responsible individual that he must be. More than at any other time in the history of the world he has become the lifeblood of

## *Preface*

all communications media. The day of the news specialist has arrived. One man may know science, another education, a third local tax systems, and a fourth the catacombs of city planning codes, zoning, and building restrictions. To be in step with this development the reporter should work at perfecting his own interests into a specialty so that he will possess abilities over and above those required for general reporting.

This book is also designed as a guide to newspaper policy. The policies recommended for handling stories of rape, attempted rape, suicide, attempted suicide, juvenile delinquency, racial identification, off-the-record remarks in speeches and interviews, illness and death, accidents and disasters, and other violent or distasteful events come from the newsrooms of the nation's best newspapers and press associations. They are not the product of the so-called "ivory towers" of the journalism profession. Every principle advocated herein is now being practiced in one or more good newspaper organizations. These policies and principles were written by today's working reporters, not by the writer of this book. While it is impossible to name all of the unknown newsmen who first advocated the principles, procedures, and techniques noted here, the writer gratefully acknowledges the help and encouragement of the following persons:

Professor F. S. Siebert, Director of the School of Journalism, University of Illinois, for numerous suggestions regarding the content of the book; Associate Professor Arne Rae, University of Illinois School of Journalism, for suggestions on proper word usage and general content; I. W. Cole, former reporter for the Champaign (Ill.) *News Gazette* and now Assistant to the Director, University of Illinois School of Journalism, for material used under the heading "Cub on the Beat"; Elmer J. Emig, Head of the Department of Journalism at the University of Florida, and William L. Lowry, Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Florida, for suggestions concerning newspaper policy.

The writer is extremely grateful to the following newspaper



managing editors and editors who sent him information concerning the policies of their newspapers as indicated in the book: Francis P. Murphy, managing editor, Worcester (Mass.) *Telegram*; James W. Mulroy, managing editor, *The Chicago Sun*; Stanley P. Barnett, managing editor, Cleveland (Ohio) *Plain Dealer*; Harry C. Withers, managing editor, Dallas (Tex.) *Morning News*; David Patten, managing editor, Providence (R.I.) *Evening Bulletin*; Dale Stafford, managing editor, Detroit (Mich.) *Free Press*; Kenneth MacDonald, executive editor, Des Moines (Iowa) *Register and Tribune*; Frederic N. Finney, managing editor, Tucson (Ariz.) *Arizona Daily Star*; Karin Walsh, city editor, Chicago (Ill.) *Times*; H. T. Meek, news editor, St. Louis (Mo.) *Post-Dispatch*; T. C. Harris, executive editor, St. Petersburg (Fla.) *Times*; Frank S. Hoag, Jr., assistant publisher, Pueblo (Colo.) *Star-Journal*; O. D. Burge, managing editor, Jacksonville (Fla.) *Journal*; Don Hogan, managing editor, Pensacola (Fla.) *News-Journal*; James R. Record, managing editor, Fort Worth (Tex.) *Star-Telegram*; W. D. Barksdale, managing editor, Fort Smith (Ark.) *Times Record*; Carl M. Saunders, editor, Jackson (Mich.) *Citizen Patriot*; Paul A. Tierney, managing editor, *New York Post*; John E. Baker, editor, Santa Fe (N.M.) *New Mexican*; Paul S. Deland, managing editor, *The Christian Science Monitor*; George M. Cox, executive editor, Mobile (Ala.) *Press Register*; Harold F. Diehm, news editor, Flint (Mich.) *Journal*; Otto C. Pressprich, editor, Saginaw (Mich.) *News*; Bower Hawthorne, city editor, Minneapolis (Minn.) *Tribune*; Gene Thorne, managing editor, Waterloo (Iowa) *Daily Courier*; James S. Pope, managing editor, Louisville (Ky.) *Courier-Journal*; Leland P. Decker, editorial department, Indianapolis (Ind.) *Star*; W. R. Walton, managing editor, South Bend (Ind.) *Tribune*; E. Robert Stevenson, editor-in-chief, Waterbury (Conn.) *Republican*; John T. Wallace, promotion manager, San Francisco (Calif.) *Chronicle*; L. S. Levy, managing editor, Oakland (Calif.) *Tribune*; William Holden, assistant

## Preface

managing editor, Los Angeles (Calif.) *Times*; Ken Doris, city editor, Cincinnati (Ohio) *Enquirer*; Victor W. Free, managing editor, Indianapolis (Ind.) *Times*; V. M. Newton, Jr., managing editor, Tampa (Fla.) *Morning Tribune*; Carl M. Davidson, executive editor, Danville (Ill.) *Commercial News*; Richard Clarke, executive editor, *New York Daily News*; George W. Healy, Jr., managing editor, New Orleans (La.) *Times-Picayune*; Hinson Stiles, managing editor, *New York Mirror*; Raymond A. McConnell, Jr., editor, Lincoln (Neb.) *Nebraska State Journal*; Harold Seipp, editor, Billings (Mont.) *Gazette*; Charles R. Doyle, managing editor, *The Boston Post*; Allen W. Smith, managing editor, Passaic (N.J.) *Herald-News*; Paul Sann, assistant to the executive editor, Bronx (N.Y.) *Home News*; Edwin H. Blanchard, editorial staff, *New York Sun*; Howard A. Swain, managing editor, Brooklyn (N.Y.) *Eagle*; John H. Tranter, managing editor, Buffalo (N.Y.) *Courier-Express*; George A. Cornish, managing editor, *New York Herald Tribune*; Fred W. Stein, editor, Binghamton (N.Y.) *Press*; Fred W. Burgner, managing editor, Trenton (N.J.) *Times*; F. J. Gainsway, managing editor, Jersey City (N.J.) *Jersey Journal*; F. E. Croasdale, editor, Atlantic City (N.J.) *Press*; Arthur V. Burrowes, editor, St. Joseph (Mo.) *News-Press*; Lee A. White, promotion manager, Detroit (Mich.) *News*; J. C. Safley, managing editor, San Diego (Calif.) *Union*; Norman E. Isaacs, managing editor, St. Louis (Mo.) *Star-Times*; Frederick Ware, managing editor, Omaha (Neb.) *World-Herald*; George E. Popovich, city editor, Fresno (Calif.) *Bee*; George E. Helmer, city editor, Sacramento (Calif.) *Bee*; Herbert R. Hill, managing editor, Indianapolis (Ind.) *News*; H. F. Burmester, executive editor, Long Beach (Calif.) *Press-Telegram*; Joseph Hill, editor, Palm Beach (Fla.) *Post*; George E. Stansfield, managing editor, Hartford (Conn.) *Courant*; A. H. Kirchhofer, managing editor, Buffalo (N.Y.) *Evening News*.

The writer acknowledges the following permissions to quote from style books, editorial handbooks, news stories, and speeches:

L. R. Blanchard, general executive editor of the Gannett Newspapers, for permission to quote from "Libel in a Nutshell."

W. A. Bromage, assistant to the managing editor of the Providence (R.I.) *Journal* and *The Evening Bulletin*, for permission to quote from his newspaper's style book.

Robert U. Brown, editor of *Editor & Publisher*, for permission to quote from this magazine.

Paul F. Craig, managing editor of the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican*, for permission to quote from the *Republican's* style book.

R. J. Fanning, executive editor of the Waterbury (Conn.) *Republican*, for permission to quote from his newspaper's style book.

Barry Faris, chief editorial executive of International News Service, for permission to quote from "How to Write the News Today," style manual of INS.

J. D. Ferguson, editor of the Milwaukee (Wis.) *Journal*, for permission to use the story "Jack Frost Keeps His Brush," which appeared in Volume III of *As The Journal Told It*.

Charles A. S. Freeman, managing editor of the Newburgh (N.Y.) *Beacon-News*, for permission to use his speech entitled "Making the News Stick."

Fred Gaertner, Jr., managing editor of the Detroit (Mich.) *News*, for permission to quote from the style book of the *News*.

George L. Geiger, managing editor of the New Bedford (Mass.) *Standard-Times*, for permission to quote from his newspaper's style book.

John H. Hoagland, manager of *The Christian Science Monitor*, for permission to use material from this newspaper.

Harold Holmes, city editor of the Champaign-Urbana (Ill.) *News-Gazette*, for permission to quote from this newspaper.

Charles Honce, assistant general manager of the Associated Press, for permission to quote from the *Reference Book* of the Associated Press and the Associated Press news dispatches.

## *Preface*

Earl J. Johnson, vice president of the United Press Associations, for permission to quote the United Press news dispatches.

Walter P. Jones, editor of the Sacramento (Calif.) *Bee*, for permission to quote from his newspaper's style book.

A. H. Kirchhofer, managing editor of the Buffalo (N.Y.) *Evening News*, for permission to quote from his newspaper's style book.

J. L. Maloney, managing editor of the Chicago *Tribune*, for permission to use the story "Nightmare Alley."

Burrows Mathews, editor of the Buffalo (N.Y.) *Courier-Express*, for permission to quote from this paper.

B. O. McAnney, managing editor of the *New York World-Telegram*, for permission to quote from his newspaper's style book.

Warren C. Price, associate professor of journalism of the University of Oregon, for permission to use the material on "Interview Technique."

Gillis Purcell, general manager of the Canadian Press, for permission to quote from his organization's style book.

Gideon Seymour, executive editor of the Minneapolis *Star and Tribune*, for permission to use material from these papers.

Chet Shaw, executive editor of *Newsweek*, for permission to quote from "What Newsweek Wants."

Robert W. Sink, managing editor of the Champaign-Urbana (Ill.) *Courier* for permission to use material from his paper.

Fred W. Stein, editor of the Binghamton (N.Y.) *Press*, for permission to quote from the newspaper's style book.

J. R. Wiggins, managing editor of the Washington (D.C.) *Post*, for permission to quote from his "Editorial Handbook" of the *St. Paul Dispatch* and *Pioneer-Press*.

J.P.J.

Gainesville, Florida  
September, 1949

# *Contents*

## **Preface**

**v**

## **Chapter One: Making the Reader Understand**

1. Reporters Are Important People	2
2. The Five W's	3
3. Making the News Stick	4
4. Leads That Talk	7
5. Boil It Down	10
6. Simple as A-B-C	11
7. Don't Use Two-Dollar Words	13
8. Verbs versus Adjectives	14
9. People Make News	15
10. Use a Paint Brush on the News	19
11. Interpretation of the News	22
12. A Yardstick for Readability	23

## **Chapter Two: Working with News Sources**

13. The Right to Get the News	28
14. The Right of Privacy	33
15. Protection of News Sources	37
16. False Statements by News Sources	38
17. Requests to Suppress the News	39
18. "Let Me Check Your Story"	40
19. "Put My Story on Page One"	41
20. Inside or Confidential Information	42
21. Free Publicity	43
22. Is the Customer Always Right?	44
23. Taking Sides	46
24. Conducting the Interview	46
	<b>xi</b>

## *Contents*

25. "Nothing New"	48
26. Be Dumb—Ask Questions	49
27. What about Handouts?	49
28. The Reporter's Future Book	50
29. Cub on the Beat	50

### **Chapter Three: Identification—Authority—Qualification**

30. What's in a Name?	56
31. Identification of News "Characters"	58
32. Racial Identification	62
33. Identification of Veterans	64
34. "Stressed" Identification	65
35. Identifying Advertised Products in the News	66
36. Authority in the News	67
37. Qualification in the News	70
38. Church Titles and Identification	72

### **Chapter Four: Time on Your Hands**

39. Know When the Reader Reads	80
40. Time Element in Advance Stories	81
41. Time Element in the Lead	81
42. Time Expressions to Avoid	82
43. Time at Deadline	83
44. Using Time to Begin the Lead	83
45. Continuous-Action Leads	84

### **Chapter Five: Crime in the News**

46. Rape and Attempted Rape	90
47. Prostitution	94
48. Bastardy Proceedings	95
49. Peeping Toms—Prowlers—Indecent Exposure	97
50. Abortion	98
51. Bigamy	98
52. Shoplifting	100

53. Crime by Automobile—Traffic Violations	100
54. Disorderly Conduct—Disturbance of the Peace— Assault	103
55. Larceny	107
56. Forgery—Embezzlement—Impostors	111
57. Arson—Defacing Public Property—Vandalism	114
58. Murder—Manslaughter	116
59. Kidnapping, Abduction—Extortion—Blackmail	119
60. Smuggling—Counterfeiting	120
61. Crime Prevention	121
62. Confessions	123
 <b>Chapter Six: Reporting Juvenile Delinquency</b>	
63. The Arrest Story	129
64. The Court Story	131
65. Terminology	133
66. Contributing to the Delinquency of Minors	133
67. Illegal Nursing Homes—Abandonment of Children— Sale of Children	134
 <b>Chapter Seven: Watching Your Step</b>	
68. Reporting Principles	142
 <b>Chapter Eight: "And Sudden Death"</b>	
69. Fires	150
70. Air Accidents	151
71. Automobile Accidents	154
72. Natural Disasters	159
73. Drownings	161
74. Industrial Accidents	163
75. Railroad Accidents	164
76. Marine Accidents	167
77. Accidental Shootings	168
78. Explosions—Mine Accidents	169
79. Electrocutions—Asphyxiations	172
	<b>xiii</b>

## **Contents**

### **Chapter Nine: Is There a Doctor in the House?**

80. Suicide and Attempted Suicide	178
81. News from the Morgue	182
82. News from the Hospital	188
83. Epidemics	191
84. Medical Discoveries and Cures	194
85. Public Health—Sanitary Inspection	196
86. Medical Freaks	199
87. News from Medical Societies	200

### **Chapter Ten: "I Have Been Misquoted"**

88. Speeches and Debates	204
89. Resolutions, Proclamations, and Official Statements	211
90. Meetings and Conventions	212
91. "This Is Off the Record"	214
92. Handling Quoted Material	214
93. Watch the Speaker's Language	215
94. Taking Notes	216

### **Chapter Eleven: Reporting the Arts**

95. Let the Writer Write	220
96. Concerts and Recitals	223
97. What the Painter Paints	228
98. Stage Productions	232
99. Direct from Hollywood	235

### **Chapter Twelve: News in Statistics**

100. Budgets	242
101. Financial Statements	247
102. Election Results	251
103. Taxes and Tax Levies	255
104. Business Reports	263
105. Weather Data	277
106. Statistics Make Features	280



107. Sports	283
108. Know These Terms	286

### **Chapter Thirteen: Reporting Local Government**

109. Government Reports	294
110. City Council	297
111. Government Finance	300
112. City Planning, Zoning, and Building	303
113. Police and Fire Protection	304
114. Social Welfare	309
115. Sanitation and Drainage	314
116. Streets and Highways	316
117. News from the Township	318
118. Special Districts	319
119. Schools and School Districts	320
120. County Supervisors, Trustees, or Commissioners	324
121. Terminology	328
122. Your Local Government Organization	332

### **Chapter Fourteen: Interpreting the Courts**

123. Pre-Trial Stories	344
124. Trial Stories	347
125. Stories of Court Verdicts and Decisions	351
126. Appellate Court Decisions	354
127. Inquests	358
128. Grand Juries	362
129. Handling Stories of Divorce	364
130. Contempt of Court	367
131. Terminology	369
132. Your Local Courts	377

### **Chapter Fifteen: Investigative Reporting**

133. Polls	382
134. Formal Surveys	385
135. Informal Surveys—Roundup Stories	387

## ***Contents***

136. Campaigns	395
137. Gathering Facts	395
138. Filing Facts	396
139. Writing the Story	396

## **Appendix**

The Reporter's Dictionary	406
---------------------------	-----

<b>Index</b>	<b>423</b>
--------------	------------

# **The Modern Reporter's Handbook**



## CHAPTER ONE

# *Making the Reader Understand*

1. Reporters Are Important People	2
2. The Five W's	3
3. Making the News Stick	4
4. Leads That Talk	7
5. Boil It Down	10
6. Simple as A-B-C	11
7. Don't Use Two-Dollar Words	13
8. Verbs versus Adjectives	14
9. People Make News	15
10. Use a Paint Brush on the News	19
11. Interpretation of the News	22
12. A Yardstick for Readability	23

## 1. Reporters Are Important People

All of the journalistic signs today point toward a need for more responsible reporting, clearer interpretation of significant events, and more interesting writing of news of government. Reporters must be made to realize the extremely important place they hold in the lives of every citizen in a democracy. They must have drummed into their minds that news is a powerful weapon, that facts are highly inflammable when used carelessly or with bad intent. They must be told time and again that theirs is a respectable job, a position of trust, a profession with the power to change peace to war, joy to sadness, love to hate, and patriotism to treason.

Reporting is the basis of all communications in the world today. The job of the reporter will be secure for ages to come because no matter what mediums ideas may use to pass from one person to another, somewhere in the background there will have to be persons to gather and organize those ideas. In a world of television, facsimile newspapers, ultrafax, radio, radar, talking letters, or newspapers that are thrown on your porch in the form of a roll of film, there will exist the need for a responsible fact gatherer, interpreter, and writer.

Because the job of the reporter is so vital today he needs to think more about his qualifications for his job. Fundamentally, news writing has changed little during the past half century, but the life that the reporter interprets has become increasingly complex. During the decades since the fierce news-column battles of the *New York World* and the *New York Journal* reporters have been trained in the art of interpretative writing. Responsible

editors have emphasized interpretative reporting as opposed to the insertion of opinion and bias in the news and as opposed to "straight" news writing. The next step is concerted and emphatic training in responsible and readable news writing. If men are to live in peace in an explosive, scientific world, they must understand better the forces that control individuals, groups, and governments. The needs of the world cry out for more and better interpretation based on a higher sense of responsibility to the reader. The reporter must know and understand psychology, social change, economics, and human nature better than he has ever understood them before.

## **2. The Five W's**

For too many years the reporter has relied solely upon the magic formula of the five W's. Today's news is too complex to be told by a simple recital of the Who, What, Why, When, and Where. To these must be added interpretation based upon responsibility and a readable style based upon the modern yardsticks of "plain talk." Significant news must be written more understandably and more interestingly. The reporter must find a way to make his readers as interested in the United Nations, an election in South Africa, their own county budget, crime and accident statistics, or a school-board election, as they are in the news feature about a dog rescuing a litter of kittens from a burning building. A writer who spends hours working up a one-column story about expenditures of city tax funds has wasted his time and the newspaper's white space if the story goes unread below the headline. Many such important stories do go unread because the writer has strait-jacketed his facts with a dull, routine formula.

Paul W. White, veteran radio newsman, says in his book, *News on the Air*, that the five W's are outmoded and the inverted-pyramid news structure will eventually "topple over of its own

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

weight." He certainly does not mean that the five W's and the H must go out the window. He does mean that they must be used differently. Instead of being packed into a lead and hemmed around with yards of identification and authority like a tail-heavy kite, the W's must be scattered throughout the story to help maintain interest, to provide unity, and maybe even to add suspense.

Dull reporting of news is not going to continue. The trend is in the opposite direction. The reporter who earns his salt in the future will have to know how to write short, clear sentences and have a bright, "human" style. Already newspapers, press associations, and radio stations are doing something about readability. They are making reader-interest surveys and training their staff members in the fundamentals of "plain talk." Press associations are shifting their writers back and forth between their news and radio rooms to help them develop a single, clear style that will be equally interesting and understandable on the radio and in the newspaper.

### **3. Making the News Stick**

The need for clarity in the news is nothing new. Newspaper editors and writers have been striving for perfection in that respect for many years. More and more of them, however, are beginning to see the need today for more emphasis on making the reader understand, "making the news stick" as C. A. S. Freeman, managing editor of the *Beacon* (N.Y.) *News* and *Newburgh* (N.Y.) *News* puts it. Said Mr. Freeman in a recent address:

Newspapermen aren't supposed to be subject to shock.

They are supposed to be immune to about everything that would set other individuals back on their heels.

They are supposed to know that the average citizen is mostly indifferent to things which should concern him the most.



They are supposed to know that newspaper readers will gobble up every line telling about the invasion of Normandy, but as for a story about Dumbarton Oaks—well, what in the world is that?

Maybe I'm thin skinned or maybe I've been living in some sort of an ivory tower and don't know as much as I should about the mental strength and weakness of my readers.

Be all the above things as they may, I was shocked and surprised—and let me add, heartbroken—when I saw the result of a street poll taken in Newburgh (N.Y.) on the subject: "Dumbarton Oaks and What It Means to You." I'll wager that if I were to ask each editor here he would tell me that HIS readers must know what Dumbarton Oaks is and what it means to them.

Take my advice and don't place any bets on it.

I would have been willing, before I saw the poll, to lay two-bits—and that's a lot of money for any newspaperman to toy with—that he wouldn't expect such an answer as we got. Dumbarton Oaks? What's that? Is it a tree?

So stop kidding yourself if you think your readers are well-informed.

And if you will take a tip from me—you had better start checking up on your readers, and yourself—and find out how well you are succeeding or how you are failing in making people aware of important events.

Offhand you will tell me that you have printed columns and columns of stories on Dumbarton Oaks, and that your editorial page has contained innumerable discussions of the subject.

So you did, and so did *The News*.

I felt sure that we had given adequate treatment to such an important story. Hadn't we printed all the wires carried on the Dumbarton Oaks conference, and printed about all the features sent us on the subject?

Yes, we had. But apparently going through the routine motions isn't enough. Something is lacking—we must have failed somewhere along the line, and now I seek the answer to what I think is going to be tops in newspapers' post-war problems.

A "man in the street" survey was taken by members of the League of Women Voters, the Junior League, Young Women's Christian Association and the American Association of University Women, organizations which function in Newburgh as they do in your cities.

The question put to the "man in the street" by these earnest workers was: "Dumbarton Oaks and What It Means to You."

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

To the first part of the theme "Dumbarton Oaks" let me cite you some of the answers:

Is it a tree?

A place in Washington?

A cereal?

The name of a movie?

A big prison camp?

A mansion in England for service men?

A store?

A donation for the Red Cross?

An island?

A place in California?

And lots more of the same.

And here are some more statements the polltakers jotted down:

Sorry, I don't live in town.

I've been out of school so long I don't remember.

I only read Dick Tracy.

I don't pay any attention to those things.

I have no idea.

I'm not interested in political things.

I have too much else on my mind.

Has it something to do with Palestine or England?

And again, lots more of the same.

The only place where the solicitors received any kind of an intelligent reply was at the Newburgh Free Academy, and there the percentage of intelligent replies should have been higher.

In substance, the poll brought forth the amazing revelation that 122 out of 185 persons questioned had no idea of what was meant by Dumbarton Oaks.

Among those who knew the right answer was a young woman, a native of Scotland. "I sure do know what it is," she told inquirers. "I'm a newly naturalized citizen and I have learned all I could about my wonderful new country."

It is a sad commentary on hope for lasting peace that in a city with more than 4,000 men in the armed forces, only 44 per cent of a cross section of the population knew or cared about the plans for such a peace.

Well, what did we do about it? With these amazing figures in our hands we set about to tell again all we could about Dumbarton Oaks and what it meant to the people.

We reprinted, and in the simplest language we could muster, a brief outline of the plan and its organizational setup. We gathered other material about Dumbarton Oaks and devoted almost a page in the paper to the subject.

But if I was shocked by the poll disclosure, I was also full of fear.

Fear for the future, fear for my newspaper and for all newspapers, if this lack of knowledge on so important a question was prevalent.

What's wrong when a street poll shows such results? Are you and I falling down on our job of informing readers, or is just printing the news the end of our obligation?

My fear is based on two things: What are newspapers going to do when a universal subject such as a world war is told to a victorious conclusion, and what must newspapers do to make people aware of important events?

I know what FEG (Mr. Gannett) would tell me. He would say that newspapers must keep eternally hammering away at a subject until the reader cries, "I've had enough. Stop it. I know all about the subject now." I know that is one thing that is wrong. We don't hammer away enough. We start out well the first day and then drop it for the next subject.

Now let me ask you these questions:

Are newspapers doing their job?

Are we printing news in such a way as to make it immediately attractive and interesting?

Are we putting life into such topics as Dumbarton Oaks, Bretton Woods, and tariff bills, so as to compel reading them?

Are we trying to entertain rather than inform readers?

Do we consider our duty done when we print the news?

Or am I making much ado about nothing?

#### **4. Leads That Talk**

Reporters generally give a lot of thought to their leads, the beginning of their stories. A reporter covering a music festival calls rewrite. "Say, Jim," he says, "both of the winners here tonight are daughters of railroad engineers. That will make a swell lead." The reporter had a feature to go in his lead and he was happy.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

If readers are going to be better informed in the future, your lead will have to do more than merely interest the reader, however. It must persuade him to keep on reading. Headline readers and lead readers are developed by "roundup beginnings" that sum up the news in the first paragraph so that the reader feels that he knows all he needs to know about the event. The old hands have been telling the cubs for a long time that the lead should contain the five W's and possibly the How, so that if the story is cut in the composing room or on the copy desk the "kernel of the news" will remain. They have been saying also that the inverted-pyramid structure is satisfactory because that is the way people talk. Maybe so. Let's try one.

President Truman recommended to Congress today a sweeping revision of legislation under which the Executive branch of the Government has been exercising extraordinary powers pursuant to declarations of a state of emergency by President Roosevelt in 1939 and in 1941.

Would you *tell* the story that way? Or would you say, "President Truman asked Congress to repeal some of the wartime control laws today." To be a little bit more formal we might write the lead as it appeared in the *New York Daily News*:

President Truman today asked Congress to repeal 24 wartime control laws outright and listed 78 others he wanted to be extended or allowed to lapse.

The lead is still "talkable." It reads smoothly and will bear reading aloud. One of the best tests you can apply to any lead is to read it aloud. If you run out of breath, it is too long. It is not natural for a person to speak in stilted, formal language with a lot of "accordings to" and "confirmations of." Since many persons "listen" when they read, their understanding of the news is heightened when you write as simply as you talk.

Good newspapermen feel today that the reporter has finished only half of his job if he merely writes a story that can be understood. The news must also be written so that it cannot pos-

sibly be misunderstood. The following example of the difference between a lead written for a newspaper and one written for radio is presented in the *Reference Book* of the *Associated Press*:

#### FOR NEWSPAPER READERS

WASHINGTON, Pa.—James Herbert Case, Jr., 39, son of the former board chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York City, was elected president of Washington and Jefferson College today.

#### FOR RADIO LISTENERS

WASHINGTON, Pa.—A new president for Washington and Jefferson College was elected today. He is James Herbert Case, Jr., 39 years old. His father was formerly chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York City.

There is a possibility that the second lead would be just as “readable” in the newspaper as it is “listenable” on the air. These leads were simplified to show the differences between radio and newspaper news writing, but they also serve to illustrate the differences between an orthodox news lead and one that follows many of the principles of readability to be discussed later.

Actually there should be no great difference between radio news style and newspaper news style. The two have already been brought close together by the mutual objective of communicating to the listener or reader. Radio has been forced to develop a special kind of news writing because orthodox news style failed to meet its needs. The things the radio news writer has contributed to the craft to help remove the “static” from our thought waves should now be adopted by the newspaper reporter. The radio writer is urged to “talk” his leads, his entire news story. The newspaper reporter can achieve understanding on the part of his reader with the same device. Many of the other techniques mentioned in these pages are now being used by radio news writers. They will also make for a more interesting and understandable style in the newspaper.

## 5. **Boil It Down**

The trend today is toward shorter leads. Surveys of press association stories and the local pages of outstanding dailies throughout the nation indicate that the average lead is about thirty words. INS instructs its reporters: "Try to write it in three typewriter lines or less—four teletype lines or less. Usually the news can be told effectively within those limits. The man in the street can tell the facts of most leads—after reading or listening to them—in twenty words or less. The headline writer does it in ten words or less."

Divide the lead into two sentences, particularly when it is desirable to tell of two actions or developments in the first paragraph. For example:

Confirmation was lacking at the plant today of a report by the *Blankville Journal* that several live victims have been found in the ruins of the Kokomo chemical works by rescue workers probing what was left of the plant after it was swept by flames and ripped apart by numerous explosions yesterday.

The story should be told simply:

Rescue workers probing the ruins of the Kokomo chemical works today were reported by the *Blankville Journal* to have found several victims alive, but confirmation at the plant was lacking. The plant was leveled by flames and explosions yesterday.

In the second version of the story thirteen fewer words are used, and the reader finds the news given to him in two sentences instead of one long sentence.

Long, unwieldy leads often can be avoided by breaking them into two paragraphs. Suppose that the lead read as follows:

A ladder protruding from an automobile parked diagonal to the curb in front of 910 West Blue Street caused the death of Solomon F. Coplin, 11, of 57 North Dakota Avenue in a freak accident at 9:10 A.M. today. The boy was riding his bicycle east on Blue Street and did

not see the ladder which swept him from his bike into the path of a truck.

The story is much easier to read and much easier to understand on the air when it is rewritten as two paragraphs as follows:

A ladder protruding from a parked automobile caused the death of Solomon F. Coplin, 11, of 57 North Dakota Avenue, in a freak accident at 9:10 A.M. today.

The boy was riding his bicycle east on Blue Street and the car was parked diagonal to the curb in front of 910 West Blue Street. Apparently Solomon did not see the ladder and it swept him from his bike into the path of a truck.

If you find that you have a tendency to write long, cumbersome leads, look for the "lead" of your lead and rewrite it as the lead of the story.

Keep the paragraphs and sentences of your news story short. *Newsweek* advises its correspondents, "Unlike a newspaper story, a *Newsweek* story should be organized in little watertight compartments. All the facts pertaining to any given part should be put in one section, and so on all through the story." The same advice can be given the newspaper writer. His news stories should have the unity and clarity that short, well-organized paragraphs will give them.

Sentences should average about twenty words in length. This does not mean that every sentence in the news story must be twenty words long. They should *average* about twenty words. Analysis of articles in magazines with high circulations shows that their sentences average between fifteen and twenty words. Newspapers, intended for mass circulation, should do as well.

## **6. Simple as A-B-C**

Everyone understands a simple, declarative sentence. A simple sentence is one with a subject and a predicate—a subject, verb,

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

object. Avoid opening a sentence with long, modifying phrases or clauses. Such phrases or clauses are stumbling blocks to clear thought. For example:

Striking at the basic differences between the democratic countries and Soviet Russia without actually mentioning names, President Harry S. Truman yesterday made a stirring appeal "to all nations and all peoples to break down the artificial barriers which separate them."

Reading time can be shortened and understanding increased if we change the lead to read:

President Truman yesterday made a stirring appeal "to all nations and all peoples to break down the artificial barriers which separate them."

In his appeal the President struck at the basic differences between the democratic countries and Soviet Russia without actually mentioning names.

Long independent, or subordinate, clauses tacked on the end of a sentence will likewise slow down the thinking process of your readers. For example:

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower warned today a new war would bring a quick aerial attack upon the industrial areas around the Great Lakes when he appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and he called for speedy coordination of the Western Hemisphere's defenses, saying cooperation will make the Americas "a family of nations."

The writer has packed many ideas into the fifty-six words of this lead, but the sentences must be untangled before those ideas are clear.

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower warned today a new war would bring a quick aerial attack upon the industrial areas around the Great Lakes.

He called for speedy coordination of the Western Hemisphere's defenses, saying cooperation will make the Americas "a family of nations." Appearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, etc.



If the sentence structure of your lead, and later on your news body paragraphs, are so complicated that the reader has to re-read, you get a zero for readability.

## **7. Don't Use Two-Dollar Words**

Another way to make your reader understand without too much agitation of his gray matter is to use simple words instead of those long, obscure terms whose meaning for most persons is hidden in a kind of smoky fog. Readability experts use the term "fog index" to indicate the degree of understanding that people have for particular words. For example, in a hundred-word sample, if there are fifty complicated words and fifty simple words, the "fog" is dense, the "fog index" is high.

Fancy writing, use of technical words and phrases, use of foreign words and phrases, and the use of general words and phrases instead of concrete words add to the confusion of readers. For his pennies the reader expects his newspaper to untangle the complicated, formal language of official orders of one kind or another and tell him what they mean in plain terms. As an example of concreteness *Newsweek* quotes the following for its correspondents:

Perhaps the best example of concreteness is the one President Roosevelt hopped on. This was an order issued by James M. Landis in Washington. It read: "Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal Government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination. Such obscuration may be obtained either by blackout construction or by termination of the illumination. This will, of course, require that in building areas in which production must continue during the blackout, construction must be provided that internal illumination may continue."

Mr. Roosevelt said to write it this way: "Tell them that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

windows. In buildings where they can afford to let the work stop for a while, turn out the lights."

What Mr. Roosevelt did here was simply to put the directions in plain conversational terms. When he said light, he said light, not illumination.

The old excuse that newspaper reporters do not have time to write as clearly as magazine reporters, for example, and that desk men do not have time to clean up garbled writing is invalid. By proper training the reporter can eliminate from his news vocabulary such expressions as "termination of the illumination" in favor of "turn out the lights." He can train himself to write "because" instead of "because of the fact that" and "consensus" instead of "consensus of opinion."

How many readers will understand the lead that says:

Mayor Smith today *envisaged* a juvenile court as a *component* part of the city judicial system and said he would ask the city's governing council tomorrow to take steps to *formulate* and *implement* such a vital social instrument at once.

Stated simply all the lead says is:

Mayor Smith said today that he will ask the Town Council tomorrow to authorize and set up a juvenile court for Blankville.

## **8. Verbs versus Adjectives**

Adjectives are troublemakers on two accounts. They tend to produce editorialized writing and they detract from the strength of other words in a sentence. Replace them with verbs, not the fancy members of the verb family like participles and gerunds, but the garden variety, the verbs that denote action. If you write, "A tired old woman was in the cornfield," the reader sees a picture that might be one frame out of a motion-picture film. It is a "flat" picture. There is no action. But if you write, "An old woman ploughed the rows of corn, her head drooping and her

shoulders sagging," the verbs give you a better picture of the woman. You do not need the adjective to tell you that she is tired. Her tiredness is shown by movement, verb action.

Do not overwork these verb-adjectives any more than you would overwork adjectives. Avoid the "haveitis," that is, the doubling up of forms of "have." Mark Twain in *A Tramp Abroad* wrote: "Harris said that if the best writer in the world once got the slovenly habit of 'doubling up his have's,' he could never get rid of it; that is to say, if a man gets the habit of saying 'I should have liked to have known more about it' instead of saying 'I should have liked to know more about it,' his disease is incurable."

Let's see how verbs in a news lead can be used to paint a sharp, clear picture. Suppose we write the lead like this:

One hundred thirty flashing, roaring Superfortresses will be over New York City for forty seconds today like dark clouds. Generating twice as much horsepower as Niagara Falls, the planes will make up the most powerful bombing formation ever brought together in the United States.

This lead is wordy, too long, and there is an overuse of adjectives. For a real action shot tell the story about the planes as *The New York Times* told it:

For forty seconds today New York City *will lie* under the shadow of the most powerful bombing formation ever *assembled* in the United States.

One hundred thirty Superfortresses with a combined horsepower twice that *generated* by Niagara Falls, will *flash* from the Battery to the Westchester line, with a comparable roar.

## **9. People Make News**

It pays off in readability to tell your news in terms of people. Begin your lead where the reader is; that is, begin with something he knows about and understands and then take him into

the realms where his dreams, his fancies, his curiosity, his judgment, his emotions, his superstitions, his patriotism, and his tears will find something upon which to feed. A great deal of really significant news goes unread today because writers fail to tell their stories on the plane in which the reader moves. They fail to tell him that he is one of the main characters in their news story. They fail to tell the story in terms of his needs, his desires, his stake in the news.

Take a state budget story, for instance. You can tell the reader that today the Governor signed the largest state appropriation in history, 500 million dollars. You might feel that you have done a good job of interpretation by telling him that this was the largest appropriation in history. You had to do some research to find out that one fact. But your reader does not understand the significance of 500 million dollars, no matter how large or how small an amount you tell him it is. If you want to begin where the reader is, tell him that during the next two years ten cents out of every dollar he spends will go to support the state government. He knows what ten cents is and he can figure up how much that will cost him over a period of two years.

Science is hard to explain, even to highly educated persons sometimes. But if you tell science news or science features in terms of people, readers will understand much better. Here's how the *Milwaukee Journal* explained to its readers why leaves turn bright colors in the fall.

A friend telephoned the other day to learn if the leaves up north had turned. "Yamph," we said. "They're a-turnin' fast now. You take it along U.S. 2 between Sault Ste. Marie and Escanaba, there's some right smart color in the hardwoods—very charming against the dark background of conifers.

"Fine!" said he. "I think I'll just put the old lady in the automobile and head north on a color tour. By the way, how is it in central and northern Wisconsin?"

We explained that the landscape was changing fast in those parts, too; that a matter of a week had made a big difference.

"Good, good!" he chimed. "It will make a nice trip for me and mama, perhaps nicer for me than for her because I am going to toss a tackle box in the trunk." Then he added:

"I was pretty sure there'd be some good color since we've had a couple of frosts."

"Oh, but no," we had to say in the interests of accuracy, "the frost has nothing to do with it."

"Eh?"

"The frost does not contribute any color to the Wisconsin landscape."

"I'll be derved!"

"Yup, almost everybody thinks Jack Frost goes around with a paint brush. But what really happens is that a tree decides it's had enough for one season and decides to go to bed. So, the tree builds some little corky cells at the base of each leaf and the leaf stops being alive."

"Not really!"

"It's a fact. You can read it in a book. The tree decides its leaves can get along through the winter the best way they know how and just jerks the plate on 'em—see?"

"Holy smokes!"

"Then the leaves, devoid of some green stuff called chlorophyll, show other colors—reds, yellows, oranges, russets. They always had those colors in them but the green chlorophyll was the dominant color and concealed the other colors during the summer."

"Well, well. . . ."

"The bright colors we see are from stuff called tannin, carotin, xanthophyll, and some little dodgers called anthocyanins."

"Well, I declare. How do you pronounce anthocyanins?"

"You've got me. It's all I can do to spell it."

"You know," said our friend. "My wife ain't going to like this. She thinks a little man with turned up shoes and a tall, pointed hat goes around nights painting the leaves. She thinks he looks something like one of the old boys who got Rip Van Winkle squished at the Catskill alleys that night."

He hesitated, then went on:

"Do you think I ought to tell my wife Jack Frost is all boloney?"

"Frankly, no. If she thinks Jack Frost does it, why the hell with anthocyanins," he was told. "On the other hand, you'll be flying in the face of science!"

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

"Better than to fly in the face of mama. And what's more—I think she's right."

News stories of Supreme Court decisions would be more widely read if reporters explained the decisions in terms of people. When the decisions directly affect the lives of one or more persons, as in the following story, the human-interest touch comes easy. The reporter, however, who wishes to achieve tops in readability will do well to use the same technique to explain court decisions in which the human elements are deeply buried. This story, written by James Marlow for the *Associated Press*, sets the pattern:

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14—(AP)—To Willie Francis, jailhouse, New Iberia, La.

Dear Willie: I thought you'd like to know how it was when nine men you never saw, sitting in a marble palace, talked about your future.

You stutter badly and don't read very well but still this will tell you a little of what it was like here yesterday.

You may not understand it, but you were very important for a little while in a very important place, the U.S. supreme court.

It's all marble, not like any court you ever saw down there in the bayou country. It has great, red velvet curtains, a real palace.

And the nine men—every one of them famous—sat in a row in black gowns behind a long walnut desk.

They're the nine justices of the supreme court. And for 45 minutes they talked of nothing but Willie Francis.

They already had talked a lot about you among themselves, behind closed doors. But yesterday they talked for the whole world to hear.

It started when Justice Reed suddenly mentioned "Willie Francis, colored citizen of Louisiana."

The other justices listened very carefully. They were all deeply interested for a couple of reasons.

This was their decision they were announcing about a human life, yours. It was important to them.

And, besides, you were making history. Your case is what lawyers call historic. Nothing like it had happened before. It was all in the record:

## *Making the Reader Understand*

Willie Francis, 18-year-old colored youth, sits in jail in New Iberia. Three years ago, when he was 15, he shot a white man to death and robbed him of \$4 and his watch.

Willie was caught, confessed, and went to trial. He was found guilty and sentenced to die in the electric chair. Not much fuss.

No one outside the bayou country ever heard of you, Willie, till that day last May when you sat in the electric chair, and it wouldn't work.

The electrocutioner called out "goodbye, Willie," and pulled the switch. The chair didn't work. You said you felt a "little tickled."

So you were taken back to your cell and your lawyers finally asked the supreme court not to let it happen again.

They said it would be cruel to make you go back to the electric chair a second time.

They said the state of Louisiana was supposed to execute you last May but didn't and had no right at a second try.

Four of the nine justices said it would be cruel and you shouldn't have to sit in the electric chair again.

But five of the nine said it wasn't cruel. They said it was an accident, with no one to blame for it, that the chair didn't work.

So back you go to the chair again. But you almost made it: Five to four. Five was one too many.

Justice Frankfurter spoke up. He was one of the five. He used to teach law in college. He has a wide forehead and white hair.

He spoke for a long time, explaining why he thought you ought to die. He used some very big words you wouldn't understand.

He said the accident to the chair in May was an "innocent misadventure." (I thought you'd like to know that.)

And he said the whole situation was very "disturbing." I thought you'd like to know that too.

But in the end he agreed with the other four justices, that sending you back to the chair isn't cruel.

## **10. Use a Paint Brush on the News**

People like to look at pictures. They feel that they understand something better if they can see it. Today's world and the future's world are linked with visual education. You can explain statistics with "pie" charts and graphs and you can achieve better under-

## ***The Modern Reporter's Handbook***

standing of the news if you give the reader a good word picture. Write for him a lead that he can see in technicolor, or smell, or taste, or hear. As the fellow says, "If he can't understand it any other way, draw him a picture."

A New York columnist says today's newspaper leads are full of lead. He complains that the good old days when reporters knew how to describe a scene and be dramatic are gone. There are no more Bob Caseys to say of a Texas explosion that killed 450 children:

"They're burying a generation today. . . ."

Maybe so, but there are writers, without by-lines, all over the nation who are holding their readers with news leads that read like picture post cards. In 1933 an *Associated Press* writer used two sentences to portray sharply the stern life and death of an American President. Concerning the burial of Calvin Coolidge he wrote:

PLYMOUTH, Vt., Jan. 7—(AP)—Calvin Coolidge rested tonight among his native hills.

In the quiet country graveyard beside the road that winds past the old homestead of his boyhood his body was lowered to its last sleep as the shadows of a wintry day crept down the mountain sides.

Out of World War II came a lead that pictures for all time a typical scene on a modern battlefield. The reporter wrote:

Leningrad still stood last night, while the Germans and Russians fought outside its gates on a battlefield that was no front at all any more, but only a terrible, bending arc of struggling men caught in an unending fire.

The pictures in the following leads are just as sharp and clear:

### **MARSH—THE BIG WIND**

WINONA, Minn.—The winds of hell were loose on the Mississippi Armistice day and night, 1940.

They came across the prairie, a mighty, freezing force. They charged down from the high river bluffs to the placid stream below



## *Making the Reader Understand*

and reached with deathly fingers for the life that beat beneath the canvas jackets of hundreds of duck hunters.

—*Milwaukee Journal*

### **DAWN—THE SLEEPING CITY**

In the quiet dawn of a November day a newsboy went racing through deserted Miami streets. His arms were loaded with papers and he panted as he ran. Then, suddenly, he could contain himself no longer. He dropped his burden and screamed at the sleeping city:

"Extra! Extra! The war is over!"

—*Miami Daily News*

### **CLAY WALLS—THE CRUMBLING CITY**

JERICHO, Palestine, Nov. 13—Jericho fell into the hands of the British army today after two months of occupation by Arab rebels.

The clay walls of the old city fell this time not at the sound of Joshua's ram's horn trumpets, but from the thundering rumble of British army tanks and artillery and a long column of trucks carrying British soldiers.

—*New York Times*

### **NIGHT—SOUND OF BIRDS IN FLIGHT**

Millions of wings beat the air these early winter nights as flocks of migratory birds rendezvous with their leaders, the "old birds," and take off for their winter homes along the Gulf Coast or even such distant places as the Antarctic continent.

—*Christian Science Monitor*

### **CARNIVAL—COLOR, SOUND, AND MOVEMENT**

In the quiet of a Monday dawn the carnival train pulls into town and begins unloading its brightly colored "wagons" with assembly-line efficiency.

—*Christian Science Monitor*

### **TRAGEDY—UNDERGROUND PRISON**

SAN MARINO, Calif.—Tiny Kathy Fiscus, whose plunge deep into a rusty old well casing turned a happy family reunion into tragedy,

may still be alive after more than 26 hours in her awful underground prison, a group of doctors believed last night.

—United Press

## 11. Interpretation of the News

In this handbook the greatest possible stress is placed on the need for more interpretation of the news. Exactly what does that mean? It means explaining to the reader what the news means in terms he can understand. Interpretation of the news should not be restricted to the national and international levels alone. The local reader needs to be told the “why” of home-town governmental developments and social changes just as much as he needs to learn the “why” of state, national, and international developments. Roscoe Drummond, Washington correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*, says, “Interpretive news writing is relating yesterday’s fact to today’s event to produce tomorrow’s meaning.” He goes on to say:

Straight spot-news reporting, valuable and needful though it may be, is inadequate for today’s newspaper—more and better interpretive news writing is indispensable to enable today’s newspaper to hold its own with its competition and to serve the reader vitally in an exceedingly complex world.

When I refer to interpretive news writing I am not—as I see it—referring to editorial writing in the news columns. I think that a very decisive distinction can be made between factual interpretation of the news and editorial argument. The objective of interpretive news writing is to expound what the news means and not to affirm whether it is good or bad, welcome or unwelcome.

—Editor & Publisher, April 24, 1948

Lester Markel of *The New York Times* defines interpretation, or background, by distinguishing it from fact and opinion. He says news facts are what you can see and verify; background is what you know, and opinion is what you feel.

How do you write an interpretive lead? Let’s take an example.

Suppose the Blankville city council last night changed the

city's ordinance governing sale of milk in the city to allow the sale of milk in paper containers. Prior to the change, milk produced by local dairies and sold in bottles only was approved. A straight news lead covering the situation might read:

The Blankville city ordinance governing the sale of milk in the city was changed by commissioners last night to allow the sale of milk in paper cartons.

The above summary lead tells what happened, but it does not tell why the ordinance was changed or what the change will mean to milk buyers in Blankville. Suppose we write the lead in this manner:

Milk prices in Blankville are expected to tumble soon as a result of a change in the city's milk ordinance at a meeting of the city council last night.

The change will make legal the sale of milk in paper cartons. Milk processing concerns in Pollard City and Laketon are expected to immediately send into Blankville large quantities of milk bottled in paper containers to compete with local dairies.

Now the news has been interpreted in terms of its effect on the reader's pocketbook. But the accuracy of the writer's prediction is no sounder than his knowledge of the background of the milk controversy. He knows that big-city milk processors near Blankville have been ready to supply the local housewife with a cheaper product for several years. He knows they have been prevented from doing so by a milk ordinance favoring local dairies.

## **12. A Yardstick for Readability**

If you want to be sure that people read what you write, you must work to lower your own "fog index." Readability won't just "happen." In all too many instances the reporter writes by a formula which produces copy understandable to himself alone. He

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

makes the mistake of believing that since he understands the meaning of his story, all readers will understand. It is true that the reporter will probably never score 100 per cent on readability; that is, a complete understanding by all readers of what he writes. But he can train himself to write carefully enough to gain readers. He can train himself to write so carefully that their measure of understanding of the news he writes is considerable.

Within the last decade several researchers like Rudolf Flesch have produced "yardsticks of readability" for writers who wish to simplify their prose style. In the foregoing pages a yardstick for the radio and newspaper reporter has been suggested. The rules are simple and easy to follow:

- a. Write news leads that talk. Write the news like you would tell it.
- b. Write short leads. Keep them thirty words, or below.
- c. Divide the lead into two sentences if your thoughts begin to ramble.
- d. Use simple, declarative sentences. Make your sentences average twenty words.
- e. Use simple words instead of long, obscure terms.
- f. Avoid "fancy" writing, technical words and phrases, and foreign terms.
- g. Use concrete terms rather than general terms.
- h. Use verbs for description instead of adjectives.
- i. Tell your news in terms of people.
- j. Draw the reader a word picture.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER TWO

# *Working with News Sources*

13. The Right to Get the News	28
14. The Right of Privacy	33
15. Protection of News Sources	37
16. False Statements by News Sources	38
17. Requests to Suppress the News	39
18. "Let Me Check Your Story"	40
19. "Put My Story on Page One"	41
20. Inside or Confidential Information	42
21. Free Publicity	43
22. Is the Customer Always Right?	44
23. Taking Sides	46
24. Conducting the Interview	46
25. "Nothing New"	48
26. Be Dumb—Ask Questions	49
27. What about Handouts?	49
28. The Reporter's Future Book	50
29. Cub on the Beat	50

The reporter must rely upon other people for much of the news he writes. He cannot possibly observe every news occurrence, and even when he does witness news in the making he must talk to participants for their opinions, eye-witness accounts, and general knowledge of the facts. In his interviews with his regular and occasional news sources he will encounter problems for which he must have practical, workable solutions if he is to get all of the news consistently.

### **13. The Right to Get the News**

The right to gather news seems to exist on the basis of the right of the newspaper to serve the public interest. On the one hand this right is set forth in common and statutory law which indicates the bounds within which it must be used, and on the other hand it exists because of a lack of legal restrictions. Where the law leaves off the newspaper reporter's sense of decency and responsibility to his readers must begin.

#### **INSPECTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS**

The reporter needs to know that he has a legal right to inspect public records since a great deal of the news of the day comes from this source. The reporter has this right in common with all citizens, and in addition he has the right as the representative of a business enterprise which the law recognizes as having a special pecuniary interest in public records (*Nowack v Auditor Gen*, 1928, 243 Mich 200).

The common-law doctrine as observed in the United States is



described in *American Jurisprudence* (45 Am Jur 428) as follows:

The English common-law rule that an inspection of public documents could be had by a private person only where he showed some legal interest to be subserved by the desired inspection, and that he could not prosecute a civil action to redress wrongs growing out of the misconduct of public officers, has not been generally observed in this country. It is not essential that the interest of a person desiring to inspect public documents be private and capable of sustaining a suit or defense on his own personal behalf. That common interest which every citizen has in the enforcement of the laws and ordinances of the community wherein he dwells has been held to entitle a citizen to the right to inspect the public records to ascertain whether the public money is being properly expended (Nowack v Auditor Gen 243 Mich 200) or for the sole purpose of bringing to the attention of the public irregularities in the office in which the documents are filed, to the end that such irregularities may be cured by proper public action, either legislative or judicial (Clement v Graham, 1905, 78 Vt 290).

One of the most recent cases covering the right of inspection of public records (Direct-Mail Service v Registrar of Motor Vehicles, 1937, 296 Mass 353) explains that the "right to inspect public records commonly carries with it the right to make copies, without which the right to inspect would be practically valueless." This same case upholds the right of the public official to impose reasonable restrictions and conditions with respect to the use of records. By "reasonable" is meant such regulations as will provide for the safety of the records, assure equal opportunity for inspection to all, and prevent undue interference with the work of the office.

The right of inspection has been extended to the following records:

a. The judicial records of the state should always be accessible to the people for all proper purposes under reasonable restric-

tions as to the time and mode of examining them (Re Caswell, 1893, 18 RI 835).

b. It is held that even in the absence of statute a taxpayer has a right to examine the books and records of the municipality of which he is an inhabitant. A public municipal corporation can have no private books, not even of accounts, not open to the inspection of its citizens (Burton v Tuite, 1889, 78 Mich 363).

c. Municipal and county records held open to public inspection include: assessment and tax records; letters of recommendation filed with the collector of taxes as a basis for the issue of pending liquor licenses; records pertaining to the receipt and disbursement of license fees; records in the office of the city engineer; records relating to contracts for various public works; records of marriage licenses.

d. The right to inspect state records that are of such a nature as to be of interest to the public in general is a right that belongs to each citizen and taxpayer of the state (Nowack v Auditor Gen, 1928, 243 Mich 200). Right to inspect vouchers in the auditor's office has been given (Clement v Graham, 1905, 78 Vt 290). Automobile records are generally considered public records which any citizen has the right to examine and copy (Direct-Mail Service v Registrar of Motor Vehicles, 1937, 296 Mass 353).

e. In general, all citizens and taxpayers desirous of protecting the public interests have a right to inspect the tax records (Anno: 38 ALR 1374).

The right of inspection of public records has been denied or limited in the following instances:

✓ a. No one has a right to examine or obtain copies of public records from mere curiosity, or for the purpose of creating public scandal, or from motives merely speculative (Brewer v Watson, 1882, 71 Ala 299).

b. It is held that a court may prevent the furnishing of a copy of the record in a divorce case to one not a party thereto, where the purpose is to gratify private spite or promote public scandal,

or to use it as a news item in catering to a morbid craving for that which is sensational and impure (State ex rel. Nevada Title Guaranty & T Co v Grimes, 1906, 29 Nev 50).

c. The records and papers in an action, prior to any proceedings in open court, are not of such a public character as to be open to public inspection; and during such time the parties may lawfully prevent any statement in regard thereto being made public (Schmedding v May, 1891, 85 Mich 1).

d. The right of inspection does not extend to all public records or documents, for public policy demands that some of them, although of a public nature, must be kept secret and free from common inspection, such as diplomatic correspondence and letters and dispatches in the detective police service, or otherwise relating to the apprehension, prosecution, and detention of criminals (Runyon v Board of Prison Terms & Paroles, 1938, 26 Cal App (2d) 183).

e. Right of inspection does not extend to documents and records kept on file in public institutions concerning the condition, care, and treatment of the inmates thereof (Runyon v Board of Prison Terms & Paroles, 1938, 26 Cal App (2d) 183).

f. Proceedings before a grand jury are secret, and a person indicted for a crime has no right to inspect the minutes of the grand jury which returned the indictment (24 Am Jur 865).

g. Public health laws frequently provide that the records of the health departments organized and functioning thereunder shall not be open to inspection by the public or by any person other than those that may be authorized by law to inspect them (Anno: 136 ALR 859).

h. It has been held that a pawnbroker's records filed with the police commissioner are not open to inspection by the public (Round v Police Commissioner, 1907, 197 Mass 218).

## **PUBLIC RECORDS DEFINED**

Numbers of other public records are used regularly by newspapers as news sources, either because they come under the legal definition of a public record or through the good will of officeholders. A public record has been defined as one "required by law to be kept, or necessary to be kept, in the discharge of a duty imposed by law, or directed by law to serve as a memorial and evidence of something written, said or done. . . . Whenever a written record of the transactions of a public officer in his office is a convenient and appropriate mode of discharging the duties of his office, it is not only his right, but his duty, to keep that memorial, whether expressly required so to do or not; and when kept it becomes a public document which belongs to the office rather than the officer" (45 Am Jur 420).

Through court action the following have been labeled as public records:

- a. Legislative and judicial records
- b. Recommendations filed with the collector of taxes as the basis of issuing pending liquor licenses
- c. Census reports
- d. Pollbooks of a special election, held under a special act of the legislature, deposited in the office of the clerk of a county court
- e. State papers published under authority of Congress or a state legislature
- f. Scholarship records of pupils in public schools
- g. Communications to a public officer relative to the public business when they are within the terms of the law making them public records
- h. Statistical information which by law a public officer is required to gather in the performance of his duties
- i. Records of marriage licenses and returns showing marriages in the office of the county clerk

- j. Registrar's records of certificates and licenses of motor vehicles issued by them
- k. Articles of incorporation and amendments when required by law to be filed in a state office
- l. Bills and vouchers on file in the office of the state auditor
- m. Files of state treasurer and tax ledgers
- n. Records of the board of supervisors, board of trustees, or board of county commissioners
- o. Tax records of the county and records of the county superintendent of schools
- p. Records of the county clerk except those relating to law enforcement
- q. County sheriff's records that have nothing to do with law enforcement
- r. Records of city council meetings and records in the office of the city clerk
- s. Records in the offices of the mayor, city treasurer, auditor, city attorney, and municipal boards
- t. Police records that have nothing to do with law enforcement

#### **14. The Right of Privacy**

The right of privacy thus far has not been used successfully to prevent the publication of, or to recover damages for, the publication of matters of public interest or news of public figures. So long as reporters write with a sense of public responsibility, testing "unkind" news with the question, "Is it in the public interest?" there will be no need for extensions of the right of privacy.

#### **DEFINITION**

The right of privacy is concisely defined as the right to be let alone. It has also been defined as the right of a person to be free from unwarranted publicity, and as the right to live without un-

warranted interference by the public in matters in which the public is not necessarily concerned (41 Am Jur 925).

### **RIGHT OF PRIVACY AND LIBEL**

The right of privacy concerns one's own peace of mind, while the right to freedom from defamation concerns primarily one's reputation (Anno: 138 ALR 25).

### **WHAT THE COURTS SAY**

a. A proper delimitation of the right of privacy consists in balancing conflicting interests, the interest of the individual in privacy on the one hand against the interest of the public in news on the other (*Barber v Time, Inc*, 1942, 159 SW (2d) 291).

b. It is not necessary for the plaintiff to allege or prove special damages to recover for an invasion of the right of privacy (*Pavesich v New England Life Ins Co*, 1904, 122 Ga 190).

c. In order to constitute an invasion of the right of privacy, an act must be of such a nature as a reasonable man can see might and probably would cause mental distress and injury to anyone possessed of ordinary feelings and intelligence, situated in like circumstances as the complainant (*Schuyler v Curtis*, 1895, 147 NY 434).

d. The right of privacy does not prohibit the publication of matter which is of legitimate public or general interest (*Pavesich v New England Life Ins Co*, 1904, 122 Ga 190).

e. Truth, while a defense to an action of libel, is not a defense to an action for an invasion of the right of privacy (*Brents v Morgan*, 1927, 221 Ky 765).

f. The precise motives of the defendant are unimportant in determining whether there is a right of action for invasion of the right of privacy (*Sidis v F-R Pub Corp*, 1940, 113 F (2d) 806).

g. At some point, the public interest in obtaining information becomes dominant over the individual's desire for privacy (*Sidis v F-R Pub Corp*, 1940, 113 F (2d) 806). However, the phrase

"public or general interest" in this connection does not mean mere curiosity (Anno: 138 ALR 49).

### **RIGHT OF PRIVACY WAIVED**

The right of privacy may be waived by a person, the waiver of the right being implied from the conduct of the person and the surrounding circumstances. For example, consent of an individual to the use of his picture for advertising purposes constitutes a waiver to that extent (Anno: 138 ALR 55). Posing for a photograph in a public place may, under some circumstances, constitute a waiver of privacy as regards the publication of a picture in connection with a news item (*Brents v Morgan*, 1927, 221 Ky 765). A previous publication of the matters in question by the individual himself would seem to preclude him from asserting any right of privacy with respect thereto (*Brents v Morgan*, 1927, 221 Ky 765).

### **WHO ARE PUBLIC FIGURES?**

If public figures have given up their right to privacy, how do the courts define a public figure? In the case of *Corliss v E. W. Walker Co* (1894, 64 F 280) the court said:

A person who by his accomplishments, fame, or mode of life, or by adopting a profession or calling which gives the public a legitimate interest in his doings, his affairs, and his character, may be said to have become a public personage, and he thereby relinquishes at least a part of his right of privacy.

Those belonging to the learned professions, actors, those convicted of crime, inventors, and public officers have been termed by the courts "public characters." In the case of public officers or candidates for public office the giving up of the right of privacy does not extend to things that they do in private life which are "wholly foreign to" and "can throw no light upon" the question

of their competency for the office (*Pavesich v New England Life Ins Co*, 1904, 122 Ga 190).

In a 1940 case in which William James Sidis brought suit against the F-R Publishing Corporation for publishing a biographical sketch in *The New Yorker* the court termed a public personage anyone who had attracted the interest of the public. Said the court:

We are not yet disposed to afford to all of the intimate details of private life an absolute immunity from the prying of the press. Everyone will agree that at some point the public interest in obtaining information becomes dominant over the individual's desire for privacy. Warren and Brandeis (4 Harv L Rev 193) were willing to lift the veil somewhat in the case of public officers. We would go further, though we are not yet prepared to say how far. At least we would permit limited scrutiny of the "private" life of any person who has achieved, or had thrust upon him, the questionable and indefinable status of a "public figure."

We express no comment on whether or not the news worthiness of the matter printed will always constitute a complete defense. Revelations may be so intimate and so unwarranted in view of the victim's position as to outrage the community's notions of decency. But when focused upon public characters, truthful comments upon dress, speech, habits, and the ordinary aspects of personality will usually not transgress this line. Regrettably or not, the misfortunes and frailties of neighbors and "public figures" are subjects of considerable interest and discussion to the rest of the population. And when such are the mores of the community, it would be unwise for a court to bar their expression in the newspapers, books, and magazines of the day.

#### **INNOCENT PARTIES IN THE NEWS**

One of the questions arising under the use of the right-of-privacy doctrine is the status of the "innocent party," the person who is drawn into the news story because he has some connection with, or relation to, another person in the news. The parents of a child who dies under mysterious circumstances, the wife of a man who is killed while walking with her down the street, the



husband of a woman who commits suicide by jumping from a public building are "innocent parties" who got into the news because of what happened to someone else. Do they have a "relational right of privacy"? The most recent cases of this type were unsuccessfully prosecuted under the right-of-privacy doctrine because the "innocent parties" had become, whether unwillingly or not, "actors in an occurrence of public or general interest" and had therefore given up their right of privacy (*Jones v Herald Post Co*, 1929, 230 Ky 227; *Metter v Los Angeles Examiner*, 1939, 95 P (2d) 491).

### **THE REPORTER'S RESPONSIBILITY**

Since the law does not extend very far in protecting the right of a person to be let alone, the reporter and the newspaper are left to protect that right by responsible reporting and editing of the news. The reporter must weigh each case, throwing onto the scale on the one hand the public interest and on the other the harm to the individual. If the public interest outweighs the injury to individual feelings, the news must be written. If no public interest will be served, if the news details merely add fuel to the fire of public curiosity and at the same time cause mental suffering, such details might well be omitted. Reporting of this kind does not have to result in colorless, spineless news, as illustrations in the following pages will attempt to show.

## **15. Protection of News Sources**

How far can the reporter go in refusing to identify a news source? Writing for *Editor & Publisher* (March 27, 1948), Walter Steigleman of the department of journalism of Indiana University summarized the status of the so-called "shield" laws in the United States. He said:

When a newspaperman is faced with a choice between legal duty on the one hand and professional honor on the other, only 11 states

permit him by law to maintain his code of ethics. And in one of those states—New Jersey—the courts have placed his status in grave doubt despite the law.

Because he has no legal ground in thirty-seven states for withholding the name of his news source, the reporter must be careful not to give a news source the impression that he can protect his identity with the sanction of law. He does have the sanction of newspapers and press associations, however. His own newspaper will doubtless stand behind him in his efforts to avoid disclosing the names of the persons who gave him information of news value. Individual reporters and newspapers have become strongholds of integrity in the eyes of their news sources by their steadfastness in this matter. On several occasions members of the press have gone to jail rather than reveal their news sources.

## **16. False Statements by News Sources**

Reporters may wonder what can be done about news sources who give out false information. A number of states have statutes under which the newspapers have successfully prosecuted persons or corporations in such cases. The New York statute reads:

Any person who knowingly and willfully states, delivers or transmits by any means whatever to any manager, editor, publisher, reporter or other employee of a publisher of any newspaper, magazine, publication, periodical, or serial, any false and untrue statement of a fact concerning any person or corporation, with intent that the same shall be published is guilty of a misdemeanor (Consolidated Law of New York, Penal Law Sec. 1349).

The Minnesota law reads exactly the same except that the news source giving out the false information must do so, "knowingly, willfully, and maliciously."

Better protection than the law, however, is the diligent reporter who knows his community and his news sources well enough to detect false information. To rephrase an old saying,

an ounce of checking of controversial statements is worth a pound of retraction. When a reporter learns that a particular news source is unreliable, he will do well to get the news source to put his statements in writing or have a third party present at his interviews, if the source has to be used. If other sources are available, they should be used, of course.

## **17. Requests to Suppress the News**

Digging around for additional information to expand a minor police court item, the reporter often encounters the person who would "like to have the story left out of the paper." The person might offer the excuse that "it wouldn't make any difference." News that "makes a difference" cannot be left to the news source or the news participant for selection. The person who likes to read about the arrest of his neighbor, Joe Blow, on a fast driving charge would object to the same item about himself. Few news sources or newspaper readers have a precise sense of news values. Most often their definition of news is based upon a personal interest. The reporter must judge news on the basis of the interests of all his readers rather than those of a single individual.

When the news source or reader requests that an item be "killed" because it "wouldn't make any difference," he shows his ignorance of the function of his daily newspaper. By printing "all of the news," the items that seem trivial at the moment as well as the more significant news, the newspaper depicts the true pattern of the community. A father who is unduly cruel to his son will argue with the reporter that what he does to his own child is his business and should not be related in the public press. If all such items were omitted from newspapers, customs and laws designed to prevent bad home conditions which might lead to juvenile delinquency would never come into use. Under this "long-term" viewpoint there is no news that fails to "make a difference."

What should the reporter tell the persons who wish to stop a story? The policy of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *St. Paul Dispatch* covers the situation in this manner:

Stop that story appeals must be dealt with sympathetically. Wishes of the visitor or caller seldom can be complied with; but the reasons they cannot be complied with always can be fully and carefully explained. It should be made clear that the refusal is not based on personal antipathy or dislike but is in conformity with general policy. It should be made plain, where the paper refuses to withhold a story, that the treatment being given this particular story is in conformity with general policy; that all stories are similarly treated.

Stories that cause embarrassment and humiliation to persons guilty of no offense against custom or law often must be printed because of general interest and public responsibilities of the newspaper; but newspapermen who handle such stories in the line of duty, often feel regret that it must be done. It is not inappropriate to let people know and feel that you understand and sympathize with their point of view, even when you cannot comply with it. You may not succeed in convincing them, at the time, that the newspaper is performing what it believes is its function, just as the judge who imposes sentence performs an impersonal professional duty.

## **18. "Let Me Check Your Story"**

It is a dangerous and time-consuming practice to take your news stories to news sources for their O.K. before they go into the newspaper. Occasionally public officials, distrustful of cub reporters, will request that particular stories be brought to them for editing before the reporter turns them in to the newspaper. If there were ample time and if the public official would check such stories for facts only, there might not be much objection to this procedure. In most cases of this kind, however, the news source wants to change words, sentence structure, point of view, and organization of the story to make it conform to his definition of an "objective" news story. An "objective" news story, he feels,

is one that shows him in the best possible light and that portrays his own viewpoint.

Freedom of the press is definitely involved in requests of this kind. The more often a manuscript is submitted to a news source for approval, the more strongly will his feeling be that he has a right to edit news involving himself or his opinions. Carried to extremes such a practice would result in the editing of the newspaper by news sources for their personal benefit.

How should the reporter handle these requests? He should tell his news source that time does not permit the newspaper to submit all news stories to news sources for their approval before they go into the newspaper. The newspaper has a deadline to meet, otherwise it would never get into the hands of the reader. He should indicate his willingness to go over his notes with the news source, checking facts, spelling of names, and statements to be quoted. He might explain to the news source that the story when written will be checked by the copy desk.

In the case of special articles involving technical data or complex ideas it is good newspaper practice for the reporter to work with an expert in the field. In such cases it is common practice for reporters to submit their stories to the expert for a check of the facts.

## **19. "Put My Story on Page One"**

Sometimes the publicity chairman of a local club or another news source asks the reporter to put his story on page one, or in some other preferred position in the newspaper. The reporter should explain that he has nothing to do with the position of a news story in the newspaper. Decisions of that kind are made by desk editors whose judgment is based upon the amount and kind of news which flows across their desks on a particular day. The story will have to stand or fall according to its value as news.

The New Bedford (Mass.) *Standard-Times* style book advises reporters:

Be clear and frank in dealing with news sources. Don't promise a story will be printed in the newspaper or kept out of it, or that a photographer will be assigned to take a picture. Say you will convey the request to the Managing Editor or the City Editor, then be sure the request is so referred.

## **20. Inside or Confidential Information**

In the course of your conversation with the news source he might say, "Now this is off the record." Possibly he means, "This is for your information alone and is not to be used at all." Or maybe he means, "You may use this information, but do not quote me as the source." A third possibility is that he is merely planting something in your mind that he wants to emphasize, or get you to emphasize, by telling you that it is something very hush-hush. In any event, it is your responsibility to try to find out just exactly what he does mean by his "off-the-record" remarks. Your actions should be governed by the nature of the information and the confidence you have in the news source.

For example, if you know that the so-called "inside information" is being talked about openly by other persons, you should tell the news source that there already has been a "leak" and the facts are known. The reporter should be careful to point out to the news source, if he agrees not to mention certain facts in his news story, that he cannot bind the newspaper. He cannot guarantee that the news will not be used if it is obtained from another source.

If the information is strictly of a private nature, the reporter has no right to use it. If it concerns the public interest, the news source has no right to try to keep it out of the newspaper. If he does not wish the information to appear, he had best not talk about it at all.

Once the reporter has given his word to hold "off-the-record" information he must keep his promise at all cost, otherwise he will lose the confidence of his news sources. If he learns that the news is being released elsewhere, he should immediately inform the news source in order to keep his own record clear.

From the standpoint of public good it is better if news sources are not hidden under such general terms as "an official spokesman" or "sources close to the Mayor." But, if the news is heavy with public interest, it is better that it be published under such conditions than not at all. The reporter should try to convince his news source that he will stand in better public light if he speaks out without a cloak over his words. And, in the long run, the public will have greater confidence in the newspaper.

Thus, "off-the-record" remarks of a news source can be treated as follows:

- a. Get the news source to state specifically how the information may be used by the reporter.
- b. If it is not to be used at all, be careful about binding yourself and explain that you cannot bind the newspaper.
- c. Suggest that the information can be handled by attributing it to an "official source."
- d. Request a specific date when the information can be officially used.

## **21. Free Publicity**

The reporter has to beware of the person or organization which is always trying to "get a piece in the paper." At the same time he must never discourage persons from giving him news or tips that will produce good news stories. The Bloomington (Ill.) *Pantagraph* advises its reporters:

We must at all times avoid the attitude that we are conferring favors on people by writing news and that we therefore have a "right" to expect cooperation. Persons and organizations may gain by what

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

we write, that is true. But primarily we publish news because it is our stock in trade. It is our business to have a big and varied stock. Persons who go to some trouble to gather information for us are doing us the favor. That is true down to the most trivial public meeting.

The reporter must be careful about promising space to help publicize this or that organization. Sooner or later he will have a lot of explaining to do when he finds that the newspaper will not use many of his stories of a pure publicity type. His stories are going to be judged on their merit as news in comparison with other stories and if they do not measure up they will not be used.

In the long run the reporter must learn to judge all raw news materials on the basis of news interest. On this basis a lot of what he writes will be free publicity for some person or group. That cannot be avoided, nor is it desirable to avoid it. Free publicity or not, if the material is news, it should be written by the reporter and run in the newspaper. To determine whether an item is news the reporter can ask himself, "How many times will this same type of event take place in my community?" If the event is one that takes place frequently, its news value is lessened. Just because an event is worthy is no reason for it to get a steady build-up in the press at the expense of really newsworthy items. On the other hand the worthy civic event will almost always have something about it that makes it news, makes it command public interest. Sometimes that "something" is hard to find, but the good reporter will dig it up rather than try to put over a story that has no news value.

## **22. Is the Customer Always Right?**

The news reader, the participant in the news, or the news source who complains that he has been "misquoted" should have the same rights in the newspaper that he enjoys before a judge. That is, the customer is always right until facts reveal otherwise. The person who complains about the truth or implications of



statements in the news should be told that it is the policy of the newspaper to admit its errors and print corrections. The person should not be told, however, prior to an investigation of the matter, that a correction will be made. No matter how minor the complaint is, take down the facts, assure the complaining person that the entire matter will be checked, and if the newspaper has made a mistake, the correction will be run immediately. If the reporter does not take this attitude, backed by his newspaper, he will never gain the complete confidence of the persons who are his stock in trade, his news sources.

For the news source who complains that he has been misquoted, the reporter should have his notes to prove his position or to show that the complaint of the news source is justified. Occasionally a public official will complain because you wrote a story in which his policies were under fire and he did not get to air his side of the matter. Your explanation in the story that he was "not available for comment" does not satisfy him. He thinks, possibly, that you made no attempt to contact him. The only answer is that you did try to reach him but that the newspaper's deadline put an end to your attempt. You will be glad to have his statement now and will use it as another story.

In connection with the "failure to reach for comment" problem, office rules of the Waterbury (Conn.) *Republican* state:

If for some reason it is impossible to print the other fellow's side of the story, or for any reason impossible to tell the public what anyone might have to say on any story, we are to print in the story the reason why. This does not mean that we are to state loosely: "It was impossible to get a statement from Mr. Jones last night."

We are to tell the public WHY no statement of his appears. We are to state that he refused to talk; that he was in New York for the week end; he refused to come to the telephone; the reporter rang his doorbell but the house was dark and there was no response to the bell. Loose reporting is poor reporting. The specific statement is what makes good work.

### **23. Taking Sides**

Human beings like a fight to such an extent that even the mildest of them will engage in little conflicts, petty political battles between organizations and within organizations. We are forever choosing sides in our clubs, churches, committees, boards, and even families. The wise reporter will resist his natural desire to "take sides" in group "politics." Many of the battles are just ships that pass in the night and the reporter who jumps in on one side may soon find himself disliked by both sides when the members of the "teams" shift. As small as some of these conflicts are, sometimes they grow extremely bitter. The reporter is better off if he remains on the outside, refuses to carry tales back and forth between the opposing parties, and gathers the news that either side might have or that develops out of the fight.

### **24. Conducting the Interview**

The following "interview technique" developed for student reporters by the University of Oregon School of Journalism can be applied to routine interviewing of news sources or to the more formal interview of a special "subject":

#### **PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW**

1. Find out all you can about your "subject" (person to be interviewed) before you speak to him. Ask somebody. Look him up in Who's Who or wherever else he may be written up. Get into your mind accurately his exact offices or distinguishing features. Pronounce his name over to yourself several times until it comes to your lips easily and naturally.

2. Find out all you can about the matter on which you are to interview him. It is better to ask somebody who knows than to depend upon scrap-books or reference books, but where it is practicable, do both. Read a magazine article on the matter where one is obtainable.

3. Where the interview is of a general nature (not about a definite theme determined beforehand) make a little outline of questions of

the different fields in which you think the interview might be productive. **MEMORIZE THIS OUTLINE**, and do not end the interview until you have tried out all the points you thought of.

## **FIRST PART OF INTERVIEW**

Start by telling frankly whom you represent and what you want. Address your "subject" **BY NAME** in practically every sentence. Look him in the eye, and if you take notes do not look at your notebook while you write. Look interested and **BE INTERESTED** in everything he says. Do not do much talking yourself in the first part of the interview; your main purpose is to encourage your subject to talk freely and interestedly while you are sizing him up and sizing up the matter under discussion. Little expressions of interest, approval, or curiosity are all you ought to permit yourself in this part of the interview. Yours is a **THINKING** role, not a talking role, in the first part of the interview. This part of the interview ends when you have made up your mind what kind of a story you want and can get from your "subject." The second part consists in getting it.

## **SECOND PHASE OF INTERVIEW**

You have got your hint of a possible story from the first part of the interview. But it is only a hint. Your newspaper training will tell you what details you will have to have added before it becomes a readable and complete story. Ask questions cleverly calculated to give you this "feature" complete in all its details. Do not forget to ask the all-important question "Why?" at every point. Make sure that you have exactly the Who? (including both names and identifications) What? Where? and When? But bring out the most interesting sides of the story. This part of the interview ends when you feel that you have the story complete with all the details and dramatic incidents necessary to you as a writer in order to make the most of it in the telling.

## **THIRD PART OF INTERVIEW**

The third and last part of the interview is a process of **VERIFICATION** and of going over the ground again to make sure that nothing has been overlooked. This part is somewhat tedious to your subject, but you will usually be able to hold him to it by the argument: "So long as it's going to be printed you surely want to see that I don't get

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

anything wrong." *In this part of the interview use your notes openly, repeating your understanding of the story to your subject, asking "Is that correct?" and entering corrections and additions in your notes.* Go over with special care every date, and number and the spelling of all proper names. Run over in your mind all possibilities of further information from your subject in other fields besides the one which has just proved productive. The last question of all should be the verification of the subject's name and its spelling.

### GENERAL WARNING

It is usually ruinous to take up these different phases of the interview in any other order than that given above. To begin with the tedious and vexatious manner of the third part would put your subject out of humor and very likely spoil your story. To put off the activities listed as "preparation" until after the interview loses you the chance of asking your subject about the interesting things you may learn about him. To begin with part two before you have given your subject the free range advised in part one will often give you the little story you started out to get instead of the very important different story the subject may mention when he is freely talking. The first part of the interview is generally awkward and difficult if you have not preceded it with the work labeled "preparation."

Remember:—There are three different attitudes you assume in the three different parts of the interview. You have three different purposes in mind and three different plans of action.

Remember, Remember, REMEMBER:—Look your subject in the eye all the time, appear interested, BE INTERESTED, and call him frequently BY HIS NAME.

### 25. "Nothing New"

Don't let a news source turn you away with the terse comment, "Nothing new." When he says "Nothing new," he means that he cannot think of anything that would make news. He is probably thinking in terms of major news events like fires, accidents, deaths, etc. Your value to the newspaper depends on the extent of your knowledge of the private and public life of your news sources so that when he says "Nothing new," you can start asking

specific questions about the things going on around him. Most of the time he is perfectly willing to discuss those things. The only reason he did not mention them when you came in is that they just did not occur to him, or if they did come to mind, he failed to realize they were news.

## **26. Be Dumb—Ask Questions**

For fear the news source will think they are dumb or especially thick-headed, many beginning reporters fail to ask enough questions, even though they don't clearly understand what has been told them. In such cases they may learn by bitter experience that the dumbest thing they can do is return to their office with unanswered questions in their minds. Willard R. Smith, head of the *Milwaukee Journal* news bureau in Madison, Wis., says:

Asking questions is the reporter's first line of fire in seeking information. The reporter who asks, asks, asks, soon shows no hesitancy in asking embarrassing questions—questions that may be embarrassing to the person interviewed but not to the reporter asking them. Often they are the key which unlocks and releases stories which otherwise might be withheld from publication or public knowledge.

## **27. What about Handouts?**

The "handout" is a product of modern complexity in business and government and the awareness of businessmen and government officials of the need for good public relations. As a general rule the handout, mimeographed or carbon copy publicity release, presents the person or thing publicized in the most favorable light. The reporter should accept the handout as a news "tip" only and not as the entire story. He should go back to the news source and ask questions that will help him fill in data that

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

were missing from the original release, or that will help him build a better story.

The publicity office of a university, state or federal institution, or business has become an excellent news source for today's reporter. Such offices are helpful in supplying background information and steering the reporter to persons who can answer his questions. They often supply pictures and feature material. Publicity offices that deal in genuine news rather than a "doctored" variety have the respect of reporters and are used by them as legitimate news sources. But the reporter should feel under no obligation to use material he obtains from a publicity office, except as he and the officials of his newspaper see fit to use it. His dealings with publicity officers should be carried on in that kind of atmosphere and with that kind of understanding. The practice of publicity officers is to send out their news at least twenty-four hours in advance of the release date; so generally there is no excuse for the reporter's failure to check the material.

### **28. The Reporter's Future Book**

In order to do a complete job of covering his beat the reporter should keep his own future book of what "goes on" on the run. Such a future book will also keep him supplied with feature ideas to work up on days when the news is hard to find. Your future book will give you a clue to the right questions to ask when the news source says, "Nothing new today." (See Section 25.) The reporter's future book need not be an elaborate one. A small, hip-pocket notebook with a page marked for each day in the month will do.

### **29. Cub on the Beat**

When you take a "run" or beat for the first time, your relations with your news sources are doubly important. First impressions

are often lasting impressions. If the old reporter who had the beat before you is still around, get him to give you a list of your news sources and tell you about the peculiarities of individuals with whom you must deal and the special problems of each office. If possible, ask him to take you around and introduce you to the news sources. Write down their names in a small notebook so that the next time you call you can check the name of the news source before you enter his office. You will impress him by using his name correctly the second time you see him. If it is necessary for you to cover part of your beat by telephone, make it a point to call occasionally so the persons in the office will know you personally and not just as a voice on the other end of a wire. Here are some of the things you might remember when you start out to cover your beat:

a. Don't be cocky and don't try to cover up your "greenness" with an assumed air of superiority.

b. Impress the news sources with the fact that you are sincere in trying to get the news accurately and fairly. The news source is just as much interested in getting news from his office into the newspaper as you are to get a good story. Warn him that you have a lot to learn about the functions of his office, the names of persons in the office, and that in the interest of getting the facts right you will ask a lot of questions. (See Section 26.)

c. If the source criticizes your newspaper or its policies, try to avoid arguing with him, but at the same time don't agree with him in running down your paper. Be noncommittal, if you can. Since you are new, you can probably get away with it. Later, when you know the source better, you will know how to handle his complaints.

d. Be certain, if the source gives you a story, that you get everything absolutely correct in that first account. A mistake in your first story is more serious than one in a later story. And again, don't think that your source will think you are a fool if

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

you ask questions, even on small matters. He would rather see that you are interested in getting the story right, even at the expense of some of his time and a few questions, than see the story printed incorrectly.



**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER THREE

# *Identification—Authority— Qualification*

30. What's in a Name?	56
31. Identification of News "Characters"	58
32. Racial Identification	62
33. Identification of Veterans	64
34. "Stressed" Identification	65
35. Identifying Advertised Products in the News	66
36. Authority in the News	67
37. Qualification in the News	70
38. Church Titles and Identifications	72

Three important aids to readability of the news are proper identification of news "characters," telling the reader where you got the news, and qualification of news statements. A good choice of identifying words will bring the reader and the news participant so close together that the reader will say, "Why, I know that man. He was the substitute milkman on our route last summer." By telling the reader who is the authority for the news you will increase his confidence in your writing and in the integrity of the newspaper.

### **30. What's in a Name?**

Readability is increased if the reporter is consistent in his use of local names, particularly if they are names of persons who appear in the news frequently. For example, if readers are accustomed to seeing the name Charles E. Starr, commissioner of police, they will have trouble identifying C. Eldon Starr as the police commissioner. Readers are accustomed to seeing the name J. Edgar Hoover. They would be puzzled by John E. Hoover. They know Joe E. Brown. They might not know J. E. Brown.

As a general rule names of local citizens should be used the way the news participants like them. If a local official dislikes the name "Clarence" and wants his name used C. B. Smith instead of Clarence B. Smith, use it the way he prefers.

Mrs. Gerald Arthur Moonstone owns and operates a beauty parlor. If she entertains she would like the social item to carry her name as "Mrs. Gerald Arthur Moonstone." But if the news story concerns her business, she might prefer that you use her

name “Mrs. Betty Moonstone.” Very often the nature of the story will determine how the name should be used, but the reporter should check with the news participant if it is at all possible.

When is the use of the first name permissible? Only when it is necessary to avoid confusion. For example, in stories of brothers, sisters, or other persons with the same last name, the first name might be used where use of the last name would be awkward.

First names or initials may be omitted in mentioning widely known public officials when the identifying title precedes the name. There is only one President, Governor, or Mayor at a given time. “Mayor Haggletop revealed today . . .” “Police Commissioner Murphy cracked down on the administration today for . . .”

Newspapers that make a practice of using “Mr.” before a man’s name run into difficulty when they encounter names of criminals, celebrities, or respectable persons under arrest. There are several possibilities for handling this situation:

a. Use “Mr.” before a man’s name throughout a story, except for the first time it is used, with the following exceptions: (1) persons with police records, (2) radio, sports, and movie celebrities.

b. For a respectable person charged with a crime, use the “Mr.” until he has been found guilty, then drop it. In civil cases use the “Mr.” before, during, and after the action.

c. Use the “Mr.” always in referring to persons who have neither fame nor notoriety.

Many newspapers prefer to use “Mr.” only in “formal” stories such as obituaries, weddings, and social items. For all other stories the last name alone is used except for the first time the name appears. For example: “Harold E. Stingray, director of the Marine Laboratory, was elected president of the Blankville Fish Society. Stingray succeeded Oscar W. Elly.”

Many reporters misuse the word “nee.” It means “born.” It is not correct to write, “Mrs. Gerald Arthur Moonstone, nee Betty

Hacker." A person is never born with a Christian name. The name should read, "Mrs. Gerald Arthur Moonstone, nee Hacker." And of course it is absolutely incorrect to use "nee" in the following case of a widow who has remarried: "Mrs. Richard A. Diamond, nee Mrs. Gerald Arthur Moonstone."

### **31. Identification of News "Characters"**

The labels the reporter puts on his news "characters" are important enough for him to give them a little expert attention. Identification of news participants can be cruel or kind, interesting or dull, accurate or misleading. Both responsibility and readability are involved. Responsibility is involved when the reporter describes a woman who is to be tried for teaching children to steal as "a vulture preying upon the morals of little children." This labeling phrase could be cruel and inaccurate, as well as dangerous. Readability is involved when the reporter is faced with the necessity of choosing identifications most quickly and easily understood by all of his readers. He must select the identifications that will bring the readers and the news "characters" closest together. What are the various possibilities?

a. Age. "The 39-year-old wife of a businessman was found beaten and near death yesterday . . ." "A 14-year-old Pittsburgh (Pa.) girl . . ." "Mrs. Wilber Inglewitt, 62, was found dead yesterday . . ." Identification by age should be used only when it has definite news interest or a significant bearing on the story.

b. Occupation. "Gilbert C. Conway, Silverlake milk dealer and World War I veteran, was elected . . ." "Ernest A. Bilderback, operator of the Mississippi river excursion boat Gulfwind, pleaded . . ." Occupation usually has more news interest than a simple address. For example, more readers will recognize two women identified as "Miss Mabel Farnsworth and her sister, Miss Laura Farnsworth, Blankville high school teachers," than as "Miss Mabel Farnsworth and her sister, Miss Laura Farnsworth,

210 S. Walnut Avenue, Blankville.” As schoolteachers the two women have a wider acquaintanceship than as residents of 210 S. Walnut Avenue.

*c. Deeds.* “A 14-year-old Pittsburgh (Pa.) girl who captured a rabid dog, held its jaws shut with her hands and locked it in an empty schoolroom until authorities could be called . . .”

*d. Reputation.* “Commissioner Ward Heeler, long an advocate of redistricting the city’s wards, today asked . . .”

*e. Former appearance in the news.* “John Pierpont Morgan, the immensely wealthy and powerful financier, who died early Saturday,” “Stephen Vincent Benét, 44, poet and writer who used some of the fire and brimstone of his short story, ‘The Devil and Daniel Webster,’ on behalf of the war effort, died yesterday.”

*f. Address.* “Georgia Thunderwaite, 28, of Indianapolis . . .” “beaten and stabbed in her Hollywood Dress Shop, at 1066 Hastings Avenue, Friday night . . .” The newspaper *PM* found that simple address was an unsatisfactory method of identification. In addition to the address *PM* reporters used to describe the location as “a six-story red brick tenement on upper Amsterdam Avenue (No. 2614), the ground floor of which is shared by a German delicatessen and a Polish news dealer.” The additional information makes for better readability.

*g. Title.* “President Truman . . .” “Judge John M. Broth in License Court yesterday fined . . .” The *Detroit News* says: “Apply the vocal test to titles: that is to say, rarely write a title before a man’s name unless you would call him by that title in conversation. For example, write President Truman, Secretary Hughes, Superintendent Blank, but not President of the United States Truman, Secretary of State Hughes, Superintendent of Schools Blank.”

*h. Relatives.* “Gilbert T. Scholman, 14-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. William Scholman of near Owl’s Corner, . . .” “Funeral services for Mrs. Ruth Grayson, 54, wife of Frank S. Grayson, Blankville banker, . . .” “Nathan Hall Todd, 85, second cousin of

Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of Abraham Lincoln, . . ." Do not embarrass needlessly the innocent relatives of an individual involved in a criminal or disreputable act. Except where such identification is essential to the understanding of the news and the prevention of libel, leave it out. To avoid possible damage to the reputation of an innocent party with a similar name it is necessary to identify a person charged with a crime as completely as possible. For example, it might be necessary to bring in the names of the parents of a girl charged with drunken driving, but it would not be essential to the news or to complete identification to add that she had a brother who was a professor of mathematics at Blue Mountain College.

*i. Nicknames.* "There were many things about West Point football Dewitt 'Tex' Coulter found thrilling . . ." In this instance the nickname is immediately identified with West Point football so that the reader will have two pegs on which to tie complete recognition of the news participant. Except in the case of persons better known by their nicknames than by any other, the nickname as an identification is best used with the given name as indicated above.

*j. Hobbies.* "James E. Parsons, collector of early American firearms, died today . . ." "A millionaire yachtsman today . . ."

*k. Feature labels.* In a recent murder case an 18-year-old blonde was labeled "a pistol packin' mama"; "a gun girl"; "a cold-eyed blonde"; "a steel-eyed gun woman"; "a night club hostess" (she had worked as a waitress in a tavern); and many other things to indicate that she was a bold, bad woman. This type of identification is dangerous and in many cases unfair and unkind. In an effort to gain reader interest the reporter is likely to go too far. He is likely to exaggerate so that a bachelor apartment becomes a "love nest" and a slot machine dealer a "gangster" or "racketeer." Feature labels are good identification if the descriptive phrases are accurate and held within the bounds of fair play so that a person under arrest can get a fair trial.



### **TOO MUCH IDENTIFICATION**

It is a mistake to try to jam a lot of identification into the lead of the news story. You delay the telling of the news and you throw away the chance to use the identification to keep the reader reading by scattering your description of the news participants throughout the story. Suppose you told a court story this way:

A couple honeymooning at 1947 Westal Terrace, Frank Fell, 24, and his 18-year-old bride, Dorothea, who was disclosed by her mother, Mrs. Barbara Beecher, 3110 N. Nocturne Avenue, to be a bigamist with an 8-month-old son, and said by five psychiatrists to have a "split personality," departed for prison today for robbing a milk store on their wedding night.

We have a fairly good description of the girl. We know her name, age, that she is a bride on her honeymoon, that she is a bigamist with an 8-month-old son, and psychiatrists say she has a "split personality." Use these identifications as "teasers" to keep the reader interested in finishing all of the story.

A honeymooning couple learned in Criminal Court today that it doesn't pay to start marriage with burglary.

Fred Fell, 24, of 1947 Westal Terrace, departed for Cool City penitentiary to serve four concurrent sentences of three to six years. His bride, Dorothea, 18, was headed for Tower Reformatory to spend one to two years.

The two, married in the County Building July 19, were arrested that night while robbing a milk store at 1776 Independence Avenue.

In a tearful plea for her daughter, Mrs. Barbara Beecher, 3110 N. Nocturne Avenue, disclosed that Dorothea is a bigamist, with an 8-month-old son.

Husband No. 1, whom Dorothea married in California two years ago, has started divorce proceedings, Mrs. Beecher said.

Furthermore, she continued, Dorothea was examined by five psychiatrists and found to have a "split personality."

Unmoved, Judge Thomas Wooton pronounced sentence.

## IDENTIFICATION AND PARAGRAPH BEGINNINGS

Additional identification is useful to avoid "sameness" in paragraph beginnings. For example, if two high-school teachers are injured in an automobile accident, that fact will be made known in the lead. Assuming that they are sisters, the following identifications might be used to begin paragraphs: "The Hull sisters," "the two women," "the schoolteachers," "Miss Laura Hull and her sister," "pioneer residents of the county, the teachers," etc. Using this technique the reporter spreads his identifications throughout the story and avoids beginning each paragraph with the names of the news participants.

The reporter should not write "the Hull women," nor should he write "the Smith woman," when referring to a female defendant. Call her Miss or Mrs. Smith.

### 32. Racial Identification

Newsmen are beginning to feel more strongly about the need for more careful use of racial identification in news stories. The *Editorial Handbook* of the St. Paul *Dispatch* and *Pioneer Press* gives this reason:

The basic reason for not using racial descriptions is that repeated stories employing names of one or two races may be literally true but they convey, collectively, over a period of time, an essentially false impression that the races most commonly referred to by name, in such cases, commit more crimes than other races, not so distinguishable or not so often identified.

A New York *Times* editorial writer concludes, "News that encourages racial discrimination may sometimes be of interest, but responsible journalism has a higher law than a passing interest." An editorial rule of *The Hartford (Conn.) Courant* reads, "Except where it is essential that such facts be stated, do not give the race of anyone involved in a discreditable situation."

### *Identification—Authority—Qualification*

These statements indicate a general trend away from use of racial identification, but what about specific policies that will fit individual cases? Should the reporter ignore race altogether and never use racial identification? Growing out of a survey of policies of major newspapers in all parts of the United States, the following policies or guides are recommended:

a. Use racial identification in a news story that depicts an achievement of the race or a creditable act of some member of the race.

b. Use racial identification in news stories of persons sought by the police. Newspapers using this policy do not feel that they discriminate against persons whose skin is not white. They feel that any identification which will serve as a warning to the public and as an aid in the capture of wrongdoers serves society in general.

c. Use racial identification when the point of the news story hinges upon race. In such stories the race problem is the news of the story and cannot be ignored. For example, race is an essential element of the following story:

BLANKVILLE, Aug. 21—Indians of the Blankville area are protesting the eviction of a Seneca woman from her home.

Mrs. Mary Cook, whose father was a full-blooded Seneca and whose mother is of Scotch-Irish descent, has been ordered to leave her home by Superior Judge Rudolf A. Ward of Blankville because the home is on land restricted to Caucasian occupancy.

The editorial page of the Aug. 10 Blankville *News* was given over to letters of protest from the public. A mass meeting was held on the 18th in Y.M.C.A. hall by the National Conference of American Indians protesting Judge Ward's ruling as a violation of the State Constitution and not in conformity with the guarantees of the 14th Amendment of the Federal Constitution.

Mrs. Cook, who conducts a gift shop, and her two daughters, Martha, 30, and Dorothy, 20, have been ordered to move as the result of a suit brought by six neighbors because they are non-Caucasians. Under the judge's decision, Robert Cook, the husband, an architect, can live in the home, as he is a Caucasian, but the wife and daughters are ordered

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

to leave in 30 days. The Cook family has been living in the five-room house for more than two years.

The Indians will appeal the Superior Court decision and urge legislation in Congress clarifying the status of the American Indian.

"We want to find out where we stand," commented a full-blood Hopi. "We want to attain equality in a country we once owned. A lot of us are veterans, and we're beginning to wonder what we fought for."

d. Use racial identification in news stories of major crimes. Newspapers following this policy do so with the thought that in stories of major proportions every bit of identification is necessary and essential to a complete understanding of the news.

e. Do not use racial identification in minor crime news. Racial identification has no place in the following story:

Charles A. Legghorne, 51-year-old Negro, was sentenced to an indeterminate sentence in Cool House state penitentiary Friday by Judge Wilber B. Linzzy on a charge of forgery. The statutory sentence for the offense is one to 14 years.

Legghorne had been free since April on bond, pending hearing on a motion for probation. He had entered a plea of guilty to the forgery charge following his indictment by the April grand jury.

f. Do not use racial identification in news stories that reflect discredit upon the entire race, except as noted above.

g. Use racial identification in communities where persons of different races have the same names or similar names. Lack of such identification under these circumstances might place the newspaper in danger of a libel suit, or at least confuse the reader concerning the true identification of the person or persons in the news.

### **33. Identification of Veterans**

As World War II recedes farther and farther into history there seems to be less and less justification for identification of "ex-sailors," "ex-GIs," "vets," and "ex-servicemen" in news stories

which tend to discredit all servicemen. As a matter of fact a number of outstanding U.S. newspapers acted upon this matter shortly after V-J Day. The Jackson (Mich.) *Citizen Patriot* reports: "Our news and city desks were ordered immediately after V-J Day to guard against identifying criminals as 'veterans,' 'former GI,' etc." The New Orleans (La.) *Times Picayune* and the Waterloo (Iowa) *Daily Courier* have adopted the policy of not identifying vets in crime news unless the identification is pertinent to the news.

The following policies which are in use today suggest a solution to the problem:

a. Do not identify ex-servicemen in the news unless that is the whole point of the story. For example, if a man is masquerading as a veteran, say so. But if a former serviceman holds up a taxi, the serviceman identification has no bearing on the story.

b. Do not identify ex-servicemen in crime news unless the crime bears some relation to their war service.

c. In general avoid veteran identifications in news which reflects discredit on all servicemen, except as noted above.

### **34. "Stressed" Identification**

Stressed identification should be used by the reporter to clarify further the identification of an individual in a story where doubt could easily arise. For example, a Blankville insurance man is arrested on a charge of obtaining money under false pretenses. His name is Oscar W. Wow and his offices are located in the Blankville First National Bank Building. In Blankville there is an Oscar H. Wow, no relation, who is likewise an insurance man with offices in the Board of Trade Building. The identification will not be sufficiently clear and safe if the reporter merely gives the correct name and office address of the man under arrest. In a separate sentence he should tell his readers, "The man under arrest is not to be confused with Oscar H. Wow whose

insurance business is located in the Board of Trade Building." This is a use of "stressed" identification.

In all news stories where there is any possibility that readers will confuse one person with another it is proper to insert sentences similar to the one above in an effort to avoid a misunderstanding.

### **35. Identifying Advertised Products in the News**

The policy used by the majority of newspapers today is to call advertised products by their brand names rather than beat about the bush with such general terms as "a popular brand of coffee," "a low-priced automobile," or "a well-known brand of cigarettes." If the brand name is pertinent to the story and helps the reader understand the news more clearly, use it without a cloak. This policy is stated specifically in the style book of the Providence (R.I.) *Journal*:

The names of automobiles, airplanes, and other advertised products may be used in stories or headlines if the name of the product is pertinent and important to the story. In such cases it is not necessary to strain the sentence in an effort to disguise the make of the vehicle as: "He escaped in a low-priced black sedan of popular make." Better to give the name: "He escaped in a black Ford sedan."

The same test—Is it news?—must be applied to the use of commercial firm names in news stories. You are failing to report all the news if you identify the Blankville Quality Restaurant as "a local restaurant" in a story of arrests for city sanitary law violations. Also your story will be unfair to all the restaurant owners who are obeying the law. Identify the firm by name and address. But be sure you have the facts. In the case of a robbery of a local firm the name is part of the story. And in the case of arrests in local taverns and other public places the firm name is part of the story.

### **36. Authority in the News**

The “source phrase”—the words that tell where the news comes from—gives it reliability in the eyes of the reader, enables him to evaluate its worth. The position of the source phrase in the news story has a lot to do with the reader’s understanding of what he reads. For example, if the news is of doubtful reliability, and the reporter wants to be certain that his reader knows that it is doubtful, he should tell him so immediately. Begin the lead with the authority.

*Do not write it this way:*

Russian Foreign Minister Molotov today agreed to Secretary of State Marshall’s proposal for a report for the deadlocked joint American-Russian Korean commission, according to the Moscow radio.

In the above lead the source is an important part of the story. News from any government radio might well be handled as indicated below. Reports from radio Tokyo and radio Berlin during World War II were always written so that readers knew at once that what they were reading was an enemy claim.

*Write it this way:*

Moscow radio said today that Foreign Minister Molotov had agreed to Secretary of State Marshall’s proposal for a report from the deadlocked joint American-Russian Korean commission.

#### **OFFICIAL NEWS**

In much official news the authority can be left until the second paragraph of the news story, particularly if the source is implied in the lead. For example, there is unnecessary repetition in the following paragraphs:

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The United States government is apprehensive, it was indicated tonight, that Communist-dominated guerrilla

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

forces may try to seize control of the Greek government with foreign support, according to Loy W. Henderson, director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs.

Mr. Henderson spoke of that possibility in a radio broadcast even as the Greek coalition government fell in bitter dissension over plans to reshuffle key posts.

The lead of the above story is too long and the source left dangling at the end of the paragraph might confuse the reader. The story can be shortened as follows:

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The United States government is apprehensive, it was indicated tonight, that Communist-dominated guerrilla forces may try to seize control of the Greek government with foreign support.

Loy W. Henderson, director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs, spoke of the possibility in a radio broadcast even as the Greek coalition government fell in bitter dissension over plans to reshuffle key posts.

The same technique is used in the following story:

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The United States took directly to Moscow today its efforts to save Nikola Petkov, Bulgarian anti-Communist leader, from the death sentence imposed by a "people's court" in Bulgaria.

The State department announced, etc.

### **"DELAYED" AUTHORITY STATEMENT**

The statement of the authority for the news can very well be delayed until late in the news story when there are no controversies or opinions to be challenged by the reader. Also the authority is better delayed if its statement would break the unity of a feature beginning. For example:

The average veteran who served with the 5th armored division in World War II is now married, happily employed, and optimistic about the chance of avoiding a third world conflict.

But if one comes, he feels that the atom bomb would make armored divisions more of a necessity than ever, and if he must fight once more



he would like to be in an armored group, preferably, of course, the 5th.

This is the result of a survey made by the 5th Armored Division Association in connection with its first annual reunion, to be held next Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in the Freeman Hotel.

### **IMPLIED AUTHORITY**

It is not always necessary for the reporter to state his news source directly. The source may be implied as in the following example:

BLANKVILLE, Aug. 23—A householder returning to his Blankville home shot it out with two burglars early today and left both dead on the floor.

George A. Cliffe, 45, who reported the case to state patrolmen, suffered only a slight cut on the head, inflicted by a blackjack when he entered his home about 1 A.M.

Cliffe told his story to police:

The implication in the above story is that the reporter obtained the news from state patrolmen, which he did. In all news stories, except those obtained by the direct observations of the reporter, the source or authority should either be stated specifically or implied. Only in stories where there is absolutely no chance for misunderstanding the news should the source be implied. In all other cases it should be clearly stated. Where possible the reporter should pin the news to specific individuals. When this is impossible, but the news is important enough to the public to justify its publication, the reporter should use the best source available such as "police officials," "the health department," "county commissioners," etc.

Is there any rule to indicate how many times the "source phrase" should be used in the news story? Should the reporter say in his lead that such-and-such statement came from the Navy Department and assume that his reader will know that all the rest of the story came from the Navy Department? The best policy in all news writing is to assume nothing about what the

reader will assume. Don't leave any weak links in the chain of understanding you are trying to forge. Tell him in the lead or early in the story where you got the news. Then, when you feel his memory has begun to lag, tell him again, and again two or three paragraphs later. It is unnecessary to repeat the source after every sentence, or even after every paragraph. But three mentions of the source is not too much in a six-inch story. More frequent mention is often necessary in stories filled with controversial statements.

### **37. Qualification in the News**

The reporter can qualify the news in two ways: by complete, objective reporting, and by protective wording. Actually, qualification in news stories is a "detailing" of the news to such a degree that the reader knows instantly what part of the news has been verified and that part which could not be verified or is doubtful. For example:

a. In all cases where persons are victims of foul play or accidents and their identity is undetermined, the reporter should report the circumstances but tell his readers that the victims are "believed to be" so-and-so. Then he should tell the reasons for the partial identification. A billfold or laundry marks or other items found on the body might have led police to believe the victim was George W. Milley of Blankville. Give all the facts that will prevent a misunderstanding.

b. In all cases where the reporter is doubtful about names given to police he should qualify his report by saying that the arrested persons "gave their names as" Joe Doe, Wilber Doe, and Mary Roe. In such cases the reporter adds to the value of the news by telling the facts as they exist. In similar situations where the arrested party gives an address that cannot be checked, the reporter should write that he "gave his address as" 1947

South Woodbine Avenue, or "told police that he lived at 1947 South Woodbine Avenue."

c. In all cases where statements of news participants are contradictory quote both, or in cases where verifiable facts refute statements of a news participant, report the facts as well as the statements of the news participant.

d. In all cases where proper identification of the source will serve to qualify the news the source is a necessary part of the news and must be used. A statement by the Mayor of Blankville at election time that the city was in the best financial condition in history would be less noteworthy than the same statement by a member of an auditing firm.

e. Such words as "alleged," "uncertain," "police say," and "it was reported" are often added to news statements as "protective wording." These words or phrases are "protective" only in the sense that they show good faith on the part of the newspaper. They mean that the reporter is trying to qualify what he writes. If the words are used in connection with libelous statements, they do not erase the libel. "Alleged" can be used in doubtful stories of a nonlibelous character to indicate the doubtful nature of the report. For example:

SHANGHAI—(AP)—Villagers and peasants around Pootung, across the Whangpoo River from Shanghai, have established a day and night watch for an amphibious monster which they believe is carrying off children.

Descriptions of the *alleged* beast vary, some saying it is half-man, half-ape, others that it resembles a huge wild boar.

The neighborhood has no doubts about its existence, however, and has erected a bamboo watchtower which is manned constantly. Volunteers also patrol the creek banks.

*Whether children actually have vanished is uncertain*, but two sets of parents, both sampan dwellers, have told of snatching their children to safety in the past week when the monster grabbed for them.

Reporters should not qualify the news unless they wish to cast doubt upon an entire story or some aspects of it. If there is no

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

necessity for qualification, state the essential facts forcefully and clearly. Do not use "reported" or "said to be" in any of their forms without giving the source of the report since these words will qualify the news and weaken its authenticity.

"According to" and "contended" are qualifying expressions that might leave the reader in doubt concerning a story which should not be doubted. For example:

WASHINGTON, May 2—The Taft-Hartley Labor Bill will be regretted by those who voted for it, according to Senator Phil Buster, who today called for a revision of its drastic provisions.

"According to Senator Phil Buster" might give the reader the impression that the Senator is the only one who feels that the bill will be regretted. A stronger way of saying the same thing might be:

WASHINGTON, May 2—Senator Phil Buster said today that the Taft-Hartley Labor Bill will be regretted by those who passed it in calling for revision of the act's strike notice provision.

### **38. Church Titles and Identifications**

The reporter who can correctly identify church officials and properly report on matters of church organization in the correct terminology will earn the respect of his readers.

#### **CATHOLIC**

The following forms of address are approved in the *Official Catholic Directory*:

**CARDINALS:** His Eminence Samuel Cardinal Stritch (Cardinal Stritch)

**ARCHBISHOPS:** Most Rev. Richard J. Cushing, archbishop of Boston (Bishop Cushing)

**BISHOPS:** Most Rev. Edmund F. Gibbons, bishop of Albany (Bishop Gibbons)

## *Identification—Authority—Qualification*

**ABBOTS:** Rt. Rev. Vincent George Taylor, abbot-ordinary of Belmont Abbey (Abbot Taylor)

**PROTONOTARIES APOSTOLIC, DOMESTIC PRELATES and VICARS-GENERAL:** Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Maginn, vicar-general (Vicar Maginn)

**PAPAL CHAMBERLAINS:** Very Rev. Msgr. George Wilson (Msgr. Wilson)

**RELIGIOUS ORDER PRIESTS:** Rev. George Wilson (Father Wilson)

**SECULAR PRIESTS:** Rev. George Wilson (Father Wilson)

**BROTHERS:** Brother George Wilson (Brother George)

**SISTERS:** Sister Mary Wilson (Sister Mary)

For administrative purposes the Catholic Church in the United States is divided into twenty-two provinces. Each province is divided into dioceses. The chief church official of the province is the archbishop, and of the diocese, a bishop. The diocese in which the archbishop has his residence is called an archdiocese. The heads of local churches are sometimes called pastors and sometimes rectors. For example, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Patrick J. Hayes, pastor, Cathedral of the Holy Name. It is proper to address Pope Pius XII as His Holiness Pope Pius XII. After the official has been addressed by his full title the first time his name is mentioned in the news story, archbishops, bishops, and monsignori are referred to as Bishop Wilson or Msgr. Wilson, as the case may be. Others should be referred to as the Rev. Fr. Wilson. Most newspaper style authorities require the use of "the" before "reverend."

## **EPISCOPAL**

For Episcopal Church administration the United States is divided into eight provinces. The provinces are composed of dioceses and missionary districts. The top church official in the United States is the presiding bishop who should be addressed as the Most Rev. George W. Wilson, presiding bishop. Bishops who head the dioceses are called diocesan bishops and those who head the missionary districts, missionary bishops. Bishops should be addressed as: The Rt. Rev. William Ambrose Brown,

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Bishop of Southern Virginia (or of the Diocese of Southern Virginia).

In a diocese where the bishop has too many duties a suffragan bishop or a bishop coadjutor may be elected to help administer the diocese. These officials should be addressed as: The Rt. Rev. George W. Wilson, Bishop Coadjutor of Southern Virginia (or of the diocese of Southern Virginia).

The diocese is composed of parishes and the missionary district of missions. The head of the parish church is the rector, who must be a priest. The rector should be addressed as: The Rev. George W. Wilson, Rector of St. Joseph's church, Blankville. Other titles listed in the church yearbook, *The Living Church Annual* are:

The Rev. George W. Wilson, dean of Trinity Cathedral, Blankville

The Rev. George W. Wilson, vicar of St. Anne's Spanish-American Mission, Blankville

The Rev. George W. Wilson, priest-in-charge of the Church of the Advent, Blankville

The Rev. George W. Wilson, chaplain of the Christian Settlement House and priest-in-charge of St. Mary's, Blankville

The Rev. George W. Wilson, archdeacon emeritus of Blankville

In the above titles if any of the men were bishops the form of address would be "the Rt. Rev." instead of "the Rev."

### **OTHER PROTESTANT CHURCHES**

It is to be noted that Congregational, Presbyterian, Universalist, and Unitarian churches have ministers and most others have pastors. Thus the title: The Rev. George W. Wilson, minister of the Blankville Presbyterian church, or The Rev. George W. Wilson, pastor of the Blankville Methodist church. Pastor is used by both Protestants and Catholics; minister by Protestants; rector and priest by Episcopalians and Catholics; reader by Christian Scientists; and rabbi, by Jews.

For administrative purposes the Presbyterian Church in the United States is divided into forty synods and two hundred eighteen presbyteries. The Presbyteries are divisions of the synods. The General Assembly of the church elects a minister and a ruling elder as the top officials of each presbytery. The Methodist Church is divided into six conferences, and the conferences into areas. Bishops are elected by a General Conference to preside in the conferences. Bishops of the Methodist Church should be addressed the same as pastors, The Rev. George W. Wilson, Bishop of the Southern Conference of the Methodist Church.

#### **IDENTIFICATION BY RELIGION**

The reporter should never by reference, inference, innuendo, or comparison refer to one religion as preferable to another. He should not identify a person as a “former Catholic” or a “Christian Jew.” Identification by religion should not be used unless the identification is absolutely necessary to a complete understanding of the news, or is a part of the news.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_



**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Time on Your Hands*

39. Know When the Reader Reads	80
40. Time Element in Advance Stories	81
41. Time Element in the Lead	81
42. Time Expressions to Avoid	82
43. Time at Deadline	83
44. Using Time to Begin the Lead	83
45. Continuous-Action Leads	84

Proper use of the time element in a news story has a lot to do with the reader's understanding of the story. Despite hourly news flashes on the radio the reader still wants to know that he is reading the "last word" concerning the news. He uses the time element to orient himself in time in relation to the occurrence.

### **39. Know When the Reader Reads**

"Think of the time when the reader actually holds the paper in his hand" is the advice of the Waterbury (Conn.) *Republican*. In its *Office Rules* the newspaper explains

The day of publication is today.

The day preceding that of publication is yesterday.

The day following that of publication is tomorrow.

If the reader holds in his hand a paper published on Monday, he finds news treated in relation to Monday. For example:

The concert was given yesterday (Sunday).

The exhibition will open tomorrow (Tuesday).

The parade took place last Monday.

The picnic will be held next Monday.

The minister will preach Sunday.

The society will meet Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday.

All this takes place in the "newspaper week."

If you climb out of that week into weeks of the past or future, do it this way:

The play was given Jan. 22 or Feb. 4.

The convention will open March 5 or April 10.

If the newspaper has editions which are delivered the day following the day of the press run, these rules would make the

time element confusing to readers. In such cases it is best to use the day of the week instead of today, tomorrow, and yesterday.

#### **40. Time Element in Advance Stories and Follow-ups**

Complete time information is essential in the advance story because an important element of the news is to tell the reader what time to be present for an event. In the story of the event itself the time element often loses its news value. The reporter need not include it in his lead in most cases. For example:

A public hearing was called Tuesday by the Blankville board of local improvements for 10 A.M. Sept. 3. Property owners must decide whether the proposed sanitary sewer for Homesite addition is to be constructed at a higher cost than originally estimated.

After the hearing is held the reader does not care about the exact time of day it was held. He wants to know what was decided. So the lead might read:

Despite a cost of nearly 30 per cent above the city engineer's original estimate, the proposed sanitary sewer for the Homesite addition will be constructed, property owners have decided.

At a public hearing of the Blankville board of local improvements yesterday, etc.

#### **41. Time Element in the Lead**

"Place the time-element words in the natural place in the lead sentence," says the *International News Service (How to Write the News Today)*. "A misplaced 'today' destroys the smooth flow of a sentence and sometimes changes the entire meaning.

"Write it 'The Mead Committee reported to Congress today, etc.,' instead of 'The Mead Committee today reported to Congress.' Do not struggle to get 'today' into the lead if there is no 'today' development and if it does not fit naturally into the train of thought. Often a 'today' angle is not necessary, but every

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

effort should be made to develop fresh news to justify a 'today' lead."

As an example *INS* warns its reporters to avoid a lead of this type:

BOSTON, May 20—William Roberts, president of the New England Biscuit Co., was dead today following, etc.

The reporter should get the latest information and write his lead:

BOSTON, May 20—Funeral services were held today for William Roberts, president of the New England Biscuit Co., who died last night, etc.

~~*INS* says the "today" phrase is not always necessary in the lead. For example, do not write:~~

WASHINGTON, April 23—The famed Norden bombsight, it was announced today, will be shown publicly for the first time at a Senate subcommittee meeting Tuesday.

Write it this way:

WASHINGTON, April 23—The famed Norden bombsight will be shown publicly for the first time at a Senate subcommittee meeting Tuesday.

Chairman Joseph Blank of the Committee on War Industry said today that the bombsight will be, etc.

In the first lead the phrase "it was announced today" weakens the story by subordinating the real news and giving the reader a vague source for his news.

## **42. Time Expressions to Avoid**

a. Do not write 9:30 A.M. this morning. Make it 9:30 A.M. today, or use the day of the week if that is necessary for certain editions of the newspaper.

b. Do not write 10 P.M. last night. Make it 10 P.M. yesterday or 10 P.M. Monday.

- c. Do not write "The accident occurred early Monday morning." Early Monday implies "morning."
- d. In giving time make the hour precede the day, as 5 P.M. Wednesday; not Wednesday at 5 P.M.
- e. Say yesterday rather than yesterday morning.
- f. Do not use the long phrase "third Sunday in August."  
Make it "Aug. 16."

### **43. Time at Deadline**

How should the reporter handle time in stories of events that will take place between the time his newspaper goes to press and the time the reader reads the newspaper? In such stories if he writes that such-and-such an event will take place, the reader may know definitely that it was not held. If the reporter writes that the event was held, and it was called off after his newspaper went to press, his story is incorrect. A number of afternoon newspapers have solved this problem by following a rule that reporters will use "will be held" for all stories of events scheduled for 6 P.M. or afterward. They write "were held" in stories of events planned from 2 to 6 P.M. if the writer is certain that the events will take place. If the writer is uncertain about the events taking place, he is authorized to use "were to be held." If the event is a funeral, the reporter is safe most of the time in assuming that it was held. If the event is an outdoor affair like a band concert or an open-air theater production depending upon good weather, and the weather is bad at deadline, the reporter had better say that the event "was to be held."

### **44. Using Time to Begin the Lead**

Seldom is the time element important enough to feature in the lead. It might be used in feature stories with such beginnings as, "Today will be a big day in New York City for American Legion-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

naires who have gathered, etc.," "Today will be the first payday in two months for telephone operators, etc.," "Tomorrow is Circus Day for Blankville." The time element is sometimes featured in news stories of government where the reader needs to be reminded of an important deadline date. For example, "Jan. 1 has been set as the final date for veterans to reinstate their service insurance policies"; "Today is the final day for filing income-tax returns."

The time element should not be used just to vary lead beginnings in stories where the time is unimportant. For example:

At 10 A.M. tomorrow a public hearing of the Blankville board of local improvements will be held to decide whether the proposed sanitary sewer for the Homesite addition will be constructed at a cost 30 per cent higher than originally estimated.

### **45. Continuous-Action Leads**

When the action denoted in the lead is still going on, the reporter indicates the time element indirectly as follows:

Applications are being accepted from Blankville University students for naval science training under contract, Capt. George Stokes Phillips, commander of the university NROTC unit, said today.

A lead of this type indicates that applications were accepted yesterday, they will be accepted today, and they will be accepted tomorrow.

An *Associated Press* lead of this same kind reads:

LAKE SUCCESS—They are saying in the United Nations corridors here that Faris el Khoury, the silver-haired Syrian, is the best and most colorful chairman the Security Council ever had.

Continuous-action leads and present-tense leads have been found best for telling news by radio. They can be just as effective and accurate in newspapers when used with discretion. Spot news like fires and accidents is best told in newspapers in



the past tense. Usually spot news activities have ceased by the time the newspaper gets into the reader's hands. In an attempt to be completely objective and accurate, however, newspapers often lean over backward in their use of the past tense. For example:

Mabel M. Grass, Blankville school teacher, was in Memorial Hospital today suffering from a broken neck received in an automobile accident on Highway 16 at 9 A.M.

The past tense is justified by newsmen on the basis that Miss Grass *was* in the hospital the last time the reporter checked. She might not be there when the readers read the story. But that is a kind of journalistic hairsplitting. If she has a broken neck or other serious injuries, the chances are she will be in the hospital for several days. Why not use the present tense, or reword the lead to avoid the difficulty altogether?

In speech stories the reporter writes, "Senator Bigboy *said* last night the sales tax bill would pass the House on the first vote." He defends the past tense on the ground that the senator said this last night. He might believe something else today. The radio writer would say, "Senator Bigboy says the sales tax bill will pass the House on the first vote."

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Crime in the News*

46. Rape and Attempted Rape	90
47. Prostitution	94
48. Bastardy Proceedings	95
49. Peeping Toms—Prowlers—Indecent Exposure	97
50. Abortion	98
51. Bigamy	98
52. Shoplifting	100
53. Crime by Automobile—Traffic Violations	100
54. Disorderly Conduct—Disturbance of the Peace—Assault	103
55. Larceny	107
56. Forgery—Embezzlement—Impostors	111
57. Arson—Defacing Public Property—Vandalism	114
58. Murder—Manslaughter	116
59. Kidnaping, Abduction—Extortion—Blackmail	119
60. Smuggling—Counterfeiting	120
61. Crime Prevention	121
62. Confessions	123

Crime news must necessarily come under the heading of news that is "unkind." It is unkind to the criminal and very often unkind to innocent parties who have some news relationship with the criminal. But despite this unkindness aspect of crime news, it must be published in the public interest. Individuals must know how crimes are committed so they can protect themselves and their property. The public as a group must know what crimes are committed so that adequate laws can be passed. The unfavorable publicity involved in the publication of crime news helps prevent crime and serves as a major part of the punishment of the guilty. To argue that publication of crime news causes more crime and therefore such news should be suppressed is like saying that all street lights should be turned out and citizens should go around with their ears plugged and their eyes shielded to avoid all knowledge of the evil they might desire to imitate.

Therefore, the problem is not how to do away with crime news, since it is unkind, but rather how to present it in the newspaper in the kindest way and at the same time fully discharge public responsibility. That is the problem of the reporter and the news editor which must be solved for every crime news story. The following illustrations are designed to help in the solution of this problem.

#### **46. Rape and Attempted Rape**

A survey of more than three hundred newspapers throughout the United States indicates that the standard policy in reporting

rape and attempted rape is not to use the name of the victim except in the following instances:

- a. When the victim is a person of great public prominence.
- b. When the victim was murdered.
- c. When the woman is legally charged as the offender.
- d. When the crime leads to a public trial.
- e. When the name of the victim has been disclosed in some other manner.
- f. When the woman becomes a complainant or a voluntary witness.
- g. When there has been retaliation by a relative and consequent disclosure of the victim's identity.
- h. When police request such publication to assist them.
- i. When incomplete identification of the woman reflects upon an innocent party.

In states that have laws prohibiting the publication of the name of a rape victim it is possible that the reasons given above for publishing the name would not protect the publisher. In a Madison, Wis., case Superior Judge Roy Proctor on Feb. 3, 1948, declared unconstitutional a Wisconsin law forbidding the publication of the name of a woman who had been raped. In July of that year the state supreme court reversed his decision. In declaring the law unconstitutional, Judge Proctor had said: "Had Mr. Evjue (William T. Evjue, editor of the Madison (Wis.) *Capital Times* who had been arrested for violation of the law) merely referred to the alleged rapee as a female companion of the murdered man, as one or two newspapers did, he would have placed a cloud of scandal on the murdered man. Mr. Evjue chose not to fabricate such a scandal. Feeling that the stories would have to identify the girl, as he understood the term, he felt a straightforward presentation the wisest course of procedure."

In the case of victims under eighteen years of age, neither the names nor the addresses are used except when death results. In general newspapers try to be fair to both the man and the

woman when rape is charged, but they are especially careful of the reputation of the woman until they have adequate proof to the contrary. When a court finds a man innocent of a charge of rape, that fact should be given special prominence in the news, as well as all other facts revealing the extent of his good repute in the community. In such cases it seems fair to name the woman who unjustly accused him.

In press-association stories and metropolitan newspapers the word "rape" is commonly used. The smaller the community, the more often does the reporter use such terms as "criminal assault," "criminal attack," and "carnal attack" instead of "rape." Whatever the wording, he should be satisfied that his reader is not confused about what happened. Do not use the word "assault" to mean "criminal assault" and do not say that rape was attempted unless there is proof that such was the case.

#### **EXAMPLES**

*Attempted rape of juvenile; girl not named; attackers unknown*

A 13-year-old girl was recovering yesterday in Greenview Hospital from a severe beating inflicted by two young men who attempted to rape her Friday night.

The men seized the girl and her escort while they were riding bicycles at 90th Street and Yates Avenue. The girl's eyes were swollen shut and her body was battered and bruised.

Her companion, a 17-year-old high school pupil, was tied by the wrists and one of the men guarded him while the other tried to attack the girl. She resisted and her screams routed both men.

*Man arrested on rape charge; victim not named; statements of man and woman used in the story*

Barton A. Joubert, 29, of 4136 North Rockledge Avenue, a clerk, was arrested yesterday on an accusation that he raped a 27-year-old woman earlier in the day.

The victim of the alleged rape told police she met the man at a party in the home of mutual friends Friday night and that the attack occurred in the 1400 block of Woodland Avenue in his car as he was



taking her home. Joubert admitted intimacy with the woman but said she submitted voluntarily.

Joubert will be taken before a police showup today, then will be questioned in the sex offense bureau tomorrow.

*Name of victim used because of unusual circumstances;  
murder involved; attacker unknown*

Authorities today hunted a gunman who killed a 20-year-old former sailor and then raped his sweetheart as the couple parked on a lonely country road near here.

The victim, Arnold Paul Bigelow, son of a Blankville filling station owner, was killed by one shot through the brain. He died with his head in the lap of Miss Louise Bifflin, 19.

Miss Bifflin, who lives in nearby Springdale, was then dragged from the car by the gunman and forced to remove her clothes. During the struggle, she managed to kick the gun from her assailant's hand and fled as he was looking for it, she told Blank County Sheriff Coffey Goode.

Jumping into Bigelow's car, she drove to Springdale and summoned help.

Miss Bifflin was questioned by State's Attorney Martin Mathers, who said an early investigation corroborated her story of the attack. She was to be examined by physicians today. She told Mathers that she was not able to get a good look at her assailant, and could not give an accurate description of him.

*Girl attacked; robbery man's motive; victim's name not used*

A Blankville University coed was choked and thrown to the floor early Friday by a man who entered her room at 508 East Florida Street and told her he was "desperate for money."

He ran when she screamed but later she discovered \$3 was missing from her billfold.

Blankville police were called to the house at 2:32 A.M. and told the man had grabbed the girl, choked her and told her to be quiet. She related that the man informed her he would not harm her if she was quiet because he said, "All I want is money. I am desperate for money."

The girl described the man as "tall and very well built." She said his hair was closely cropped and she believed he was wearing a light

leather jacket. Police found no sign of him when they searched the neighborhood.

## **47. Prostitution**

News stories of prostitution should contain enough facts to inform the public of vice conditions in the community and what is being done about them. Common practice is not to name the women involved in such stories, particularly if they are less than eighteen years of age. Names of patrons of disorderly houses are used in the news because publicity is a mightier weapon against vice than a court fine. Names of operators of disorderly houses, men or women, are used, and the addresses of the houses are used. The public needs to know in what parts of the city and by whose efforts vice conditions exist if the conditions are to be remedied.

Because newspapers are read by young members of the family, the following terms are used in news stories of prostitution instead of the "language of the street," "disorderly house," "house of ill fame," "illicit sexual relations," "was intimate with," "wayward women," "red-light district," and "crime against nature." Prostitutes usually are arrested for "disorderly conduct."

### **EXAMPLE**

*Women arrested for intimate relations with soldiers;  
names not used*

Two 20-year-old women arrested by Blankville police at 3:15 A.M. Saturday in an East Main Street café admitted having illicit sexual relationships with soldiers within the gates of Bradford Field, but made a counter accusation that military authorities were holding their clothing.

The women are being confined in the county jail pending examination by public health district officials.

Both said they stayed at the Bradford Field guest house for three nights and were intimate with soldiers on the army post during that

period. One said she had registered as the wife of a Bradford soldier.

They told police most of their clothing was in the hands of authorities at the field.

Police Chief Elmer Beetle said it was the first such incident brought to light during the six-year period in which local law enforcement authorities have maintained a close watch on local hotels, taverns, rooming houses, etc., in an effort to check intimacies between soldiers and wayward women.

The provost marshal's office advised police that both the provost marshal and an intelligence officer would question the young women at the courthouse.

*Specific policies of newspapers:* "Be extremely careful of the names and reputations of women. Even when dealing with an unfortunate, remember that so long as she commits no crime, other than her own sin against chastity, she is entitled to at least pity."—Sacramento (Calif.) *Bee*.

"Time heals all things but a woman's damaged reputation. Be careful and cautious and fair and decent in dealing with any man's reputation, but doubly so—and then some—when a woman's name is at stake. Do not by direct statement, jest or careless reference raise a question mark after any woman's name if it can be avoided—and it usually can be. Even if a woman slips, be generous; it may be a crisis in her life. Printing the story may drive her to despair; kindly treatment may leave her with hope. No story is worth ruining a woman's life—or a man's either. Keep the paper clean in language and thought. Profane or suggestive words are not necessary. When in doubt think of a 13-year-old girl reading what you are writing."—Detroit (Mich.) *News*.

#### **48. Bastardy Proceedings**

Generally, it is the practice of newspapers not to use the names of persons accused of or convicted of bastardy. In cooperation with the courts newspapers withhold news of illegitimacy proceedings in the belief that without publicity sometimes much of the injustice can be corrected; couples can be encouraged to marry or at least the father's identity revealed and financial ar-

rangements made for support of the child. Where a complaint is filed or a suit begun against a famous person, or a person high in the public regard, often the proceedings should be used in the newspaper.

Where courts make no attempt to conceal bastardy proceedings from the public there is no necessity for the newspaper to hide the identity of the principals. If the trial is wide open to the general public the names of the principals have already been revealed before the newspaper enters the picture. Such proceedings, if reported, however, should be reported conservatively with emphasis upon facts rather than sensational testimony.

#### EXAMPLE

*Open bastardy trial before Justice of the Peace; names of principals, except girl, used*

Unexpected drama was injected into the hearing of a bastardy case before Justice of the Peace Mathew A. Piedpiper in the Blankville City Building today when the complainant, a 19-year-old unmarried mother, fainted on the witness stand.

The girl's attorney, Burton B. Satchel, picked her up and carried her to a fourth-floor rest room, accompanied by her mother, another lawyer, Rufus B. Kind, and courtroom attendants.

Justice Piedpiper later entered an order continuing the case in order to permit the defendant, Roy A. Deskblotter, 555 South Blossom Lane, a bus driver, an opportunity to post \$2,000 bond preparatory to being bound over to the grand jury.

Deskblotter, who was present in the courtroom when the complainant witness suddenly collapsed, denies he is the father of the baby girl born in November of this year.

The unwed mother had been undergoing an hour and a half of testimony and cross-examination when she fainted, interrupting the proceedings and causing a flurry of excitement among participants and spectators. She was revived and returned to the courtroom in about 15 minutes.

Complaint against Deskblotter was filed by the Blankville girl on Nov. 10, and he was arrested on Nov. 11, but was immediately released on \$500 bond with Irma Mae Clotheshorse as surety. He was

represented in court today by Attorney John B. Jones, while Satchel and Kind appeared in behalf of the girl.

The case had gone through eight continuances before coming to trial. Conviction on a bastardy charge, attorneys explained, forces the defendant to pay \$200 immediately toward the child's support and \$100 annually thereafter until a total of \$1,000 has been paid.

The 19-year-old defendant did not testify, his attorney offering no objection to the decision to order him bound over to the next term of the grand jury. If an indictment is heard, the case will next be heard in county court.

#### **49. Peeping Toms—Prowlers—Indecent Exposure**

News stories of peeping Toms and prowlers should not be handled with a light and indifferent touch. All too often the peeping Tom develops into a sex criminal. Today with the public attention focused upon the need for treatment of persons who are sexually maladjusted the reporter should be frank and serious in his stories detailing these matters. Use names and full identification where the facts indicate the prowling is not just a thoughtless prank. The public should be told specifically where prowlers, peeping Toms, and persons practicing indecent exposure are operating, their methods of operation, and any other facts that will help citizens protect themselves as well as aid in the capture of the prowlers. Names of women victims of peeping Toms need not be dragged into the story in situations that might be embarrassing to them. The term "indecent exposure" should be used instead of the specific manner in which the person exposed himself.

#### **EXAMPLES**

*Peeping Tom story; subject handled too lightly by reporter*

Timothy B. Touchstone, 21, and his size 12 shoes were paired up in a semi-Cinderella story in Main Street court yesterday, although Judge Morning V. Knight hit a false note as Prince Charming.

Detective Frank Tiger had the brogans in one hand and this story:

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Last Monday night he found them at the rear of 2345 North Delmonte Avenue after neighbors complained of a "peeping Tom."

Timothy, who lives at 137 South Weeping Willow Lane, was arrested a short time later in the neighborhood—rambling home in his socks.

"Yep, they're my shoes all right," Timothy told Judge Knight.

"Did you peek in any windows?"

"Nope. The shades were down."

"Ten dollars and costs," said the judge.

*Prowler; name of girl not used; prowler described*

Discovery of a prowler in the bedroom of a girl student was reported to the Blankville police early Saturday morning by Mrs. Wilma C. Masters, operator of a rooming house at 109 West Iowa Street.

The housemother told police the prowler, a youth approximately 19 years old, was discovered hiding in a closet when the girl occupant of a room returned home. The youth fled past the girl and out of the house when she opened the closet door, Mrs. Masters said.

The prowler was described as six feet tall and weighing about 160 pounds. He was blond and wore a blue suit, it was reported.

## **50. Abortion**

Names of women involved in illegal operations should not be used unless (a) the woman dies as a result of the operation, or (b) the crime leads to a public trial. Persons practicing abortion should be exposed with complete identification in the news story. In many cases of abortion the story is best not used at all. For example, where the abortion is self-induced and the woman dies, no public good will be served by publicizing the tragedy. Where the woman is the victim of an "abortion ring" or other medical malpractice, it is to the public's benefit to know the facts.

## **51. Bigamy**

A bigamist is a person who is wedded to more than one mate at the same time. A person who marries a second time before he

or she is legally divorced from a first wife or husband is guilty of bigamy. News stories of bigamy should contain

- a. Complete identification of the person charged with bigamy.
- b. Details explaining how the deceit was accomplished.
- c. Explanation of how the earlier marriages were revealed.
- d. Statement of court action to be taken.
- e. Explanation, if any, of the bigamist.

In cases where the bigamist has been married to a number of mates it is not necessary for the reporter to publish complete names and identifications of all of them. They might have been the innocent victims of the bigamist.

#### **EXAMPLES**

##### *Multiple marriages, no divorces; names of all mates not used*

A 20-year-old woman who, Sheriff Thomas R. Swindle said, became a bride at 15 and subsequently acquired five more husbands without benefit of divorce, was under a two-year prison sentence today after conviction of bigamy.

Swindle identified the woman as Elmira Anne Swope, a resident of Springdale. He said she was about 4 feet tall and weighed about 75 pounds.

Swindle said the woman admitted six marriages, but said she thought the first five husbands had divorced her. At least three of the husbands were servicemen, the sheriff added.

The sheriff said the first five marriages were disclosed when the parents of her sixth husband, Keith W. Avery, 17, a sailor of Coon Hollow, Tenn., asked authorities to check on her.

##### *First marriage discovered; annulment suit brought*

Mrs. Dorothy Lou Pickswitch filed suit in circuit court Tuesday for the annulment of her marriage to Toomer R. Pickswitch on the ground that she had learned that he was married to another woman at the time of their marriage.

The Pickswitches were married Oct. 20 at Blankville. They separated last Saturday. Mrs. Pickswitch asks restoration of her former name, Dorothy Lou Cumulous.

## **52. Shoplifting**

A good policy for handling stories of shoplifting is explained by the managing editor of the Worcester (Mass.) *Telegram* as follows: "We do not identify shoplifters unless they are professionals, a distinction which is for the practicing police reporter easy to make. We do this for the sake of the women involved, because we have discovered that particularly at Christmas time many mothers, hard pressed to take care of their children adequately, are tempted beyond their strength."

## **53. Crime by Automobile—Traffic Violations**

News stories of crimes by automobile (hit-and-run driving, drunken driving, reckless driving, speeding) must be complete and accurate. Reporters must be especially careful to identify offenders correctly. Use names and addresses and base the facts of the stories on the official charges made by police. The reporter must be extremely careful not to imply guilt in stories of arrest of persons for drunken driving, speeding, etc. Do not call a person a "hit-and-run" driver on your own authority. Wait for the official charge of "leaving the scene of an accident," and then be sure to give your authority. Because a driver leaves the scene of an accident before the police arrive is not enough evidence in itself to justify calling him a "hit-and-run" driver. Later information might show that he left his name and address with someone and that he attended to the injured, or he might have gone for a doctor. In such instances the reporter should say that the driver left the scene of the accident before police arrived.

### **DRUNKEN DRIVING**

Some newspapers have a policy of not reporting drunken driving arrests unless the person arrested is prominent or the circumstances of the arrest are unusual. But these newspapers always



report in detail and with complete identification conviction of persons on a charge of drunken driving. The reporter should not say on his own authority that a motorist involved in an automobile accident had been drinking or was driving while drunk. Drunkenness is hard to prove. With accident totals climbing it would seem to be a good policy for newspapers to give full publicity to all drunken driving, arrests, and convictions. The arrest stories should be limited to factual statements of police action; that is, the circumstances of the arrest and the charge. Regardless of the newspaper's policy the reporter should get the facts on all such stories and let his superiors decide what to do.

#### **RECKLESS DRIVING—SPEEDING**

Stories of reckless driving and speeding should contain (a) name and address, (b) circumstances of the arrest, including facts about a chase, if any, (c) police statement about how fast the driver was going, (d) charge placed against the driver. Do not say that a person was "arrested" on a charge of reckless driving unless he was officially "arrested." If a motorist is stopped by a traffic policeman and warned, the reporter cannot say that he was "arrested."

#### **MINOR TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS**

Usually minor traffic violations such as improper parking, over-time parking, parking in restricted areas, failing to stop at a stop sign, etc., are not newsworthy unless they are committed by prominent persons. Under no circumstances should news stories of minor traffic violations be written in such a manner as to make light of traffic laws, however.

#### **FAILURE TO OBEY MOTOR VEHICLE REGULATIONS**

Stories of license tag violations, arrests for improper lights, and driver's license violations should be complete as to name and

address. If the offenders are taxicab companies or other commercial carriers, the complete firm names and addresses should be used. If commercial carriers are frequent violators of safety regulations, the public has a right to know the facts.

### EXAMPLES

*Hit-and-run driver; passenger identifies man; witnesses to accident*

BLANKVILLE, Aug. 23—Dooley county and state police were still searching Friday for the hit-and-run driver who swerved into a yard near the home of Mr. and Mrs. George O. Skinem, of Springdale, Tuesday evening and seriously injured their two children, Anne, 11, and William, 3.

State's Attorney Philip C. Jones said Friday that Helen Troy, of Springdale, who admitted that she was riding in the car, identified the driver as Lloyd Bilboe, of Martinsville. Police said the car which struck the Skinem children had been stolen in Coon Hollow Tuesday afternoon from Lester Fargo, of Arlington.

The Skinem children were both treated at Lincoln Memorial Hospital here and then sent home. The boy received several broken ribs and head injuries while the girl was bruised on her left leg.

Witnesses reported to Sheriff Frank Dogood that the Skinem girl and her brother were delivering papers and were in the yard of the Gordon Hemplewhite home when the car swung over the curbing and struck them. Police said that Bilboe then drove about a block and let the Troy girl out of the automobile.

Miss Troy at first denied having been in the car, according to Jones, but she later said she was with Bilboe and contended that they "didn't strike any children."

*Pleads guilty to leaving scene of accident; all facts used*

Charles C. Dowell, Springdale, was fined \$25 and \$15 costs when he pleaded guilty to a charge of leaving the scene of an accident.

State police issued a warrant for Dowell's arrest on a complaint filed by Cornelius Pitcher, 290 West Oak Street, Blankville, who took the license number of a car which sideswiped his auto on Route 66 west of Springdale Tuesday afternoon and failed to stop.

The ownership was traced to the Springdale man and Sheriff Frank

Dogood returned him to Blankville Tuesday evening to answer the charge in a hearing before Magistrate Oscar Meany.

*Driving while under the influence of intoxicants; the arrest*

Lucius D. Plato, 29, of Coon Hollow, was released on a \$105 bond to appear before Magistrate Oscar Meany at 3 P.M. Thursday to answer a charge of driving while under the influence of intoxicants. He was arrested at 7:30 P.M. Sunday on West University Avenue.

*Driving while intoxicated; news story of the conviction and fine*

Two men, charged with driving while intoxicated, withdrew innocent pleas and entered pleas of guilty when they appeared before County Judge Julius O. Caesar Wednesday.

John N. Cooper and Everett Bowdoin were both fined \$100 and put on probation. The judge took under advisement the question of revoking their drivers' licenses.

*Speeding motorist chased by police through city streets*

Omar Khayyam, 26, of 210 South Wiggins Street, was arrested by Blankville police at 12:50 A.M. Wednesday at Prospect and Springfield Avenues on a speeding charge after a mile-long chase which began at First Street and Springfield.

Police say they clocked Khayyam at 55 miles an hour in a pursuit in and out of Springfield Avenue traffic before they finally forced him to halt. He supplied \$12.50 cash bond and was released.

*Charge: disregarding a stop sign; story of arrest and conviction*

Jeremiah Speeding, 1220 North Main Street, was arrested by Blankville police at 8:30 A.M. Thursday on a charge of disregarding a stop sign at Pine and Green Streets. He paid a \$3 fine.

## **54. Disorderly Conduct—Disturbance of the Peace— Assault**

Since the term "disorderly conduct" is used rather freely as a charge to cover a number of different situations, the reporter

should explain specifically what it means in each case. The term is used as the charge against persons arrested for (a) fighting, (b) gambling, (c) intoxication, (d) prostitution, and (e) destruction of property.

Arrest and conviction stories on drunkenness are used less frequently in large metropolitan newspapers than in smaller city dailies unless some unusual element or prominent person is involved. Where the stories are used the reporter should be especially careful in the arrest story not to use names if there is any doubt about the person's intoxication. The word of a policeman or an onlooker at a free-for-all that a certain person was drunk will not hold up in court. If a doctor has been called and tests made, the reporter is on safer ground. Firm names and addresses of taverns, night clubs, inns, hotels, beer gardens, etc. should be given in news stories of drunk and disorderly conduct. Do not disguise the name of the establishment by using such terms as "a local tavern" or a "Main Street hotel." If charges are brought against the operators of such places of business, these also should be included in the story.

Names and addresses should be used in stories of persons accused of the following: (a) resisting arrest, (b) destruction of private (or public) property, (c) vagrancy, (d) malicious mischief, (e) assault, (f) assault and battery, (g) assault with a deadly weapon, (h) assault with intent to kill, and (i) assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill. Since the above general terms are used for the official wording of the charge, it is necessary for the reporter to explain exactly what the arrested person was doing to cause his arrest on the particular charge. Tell the reader what the "deadly weapon" was and how the assault was carried out. Such stories should be conservative in language and limited to police action and official charges. The reporter should never on his own authority indicate that there was "intent to kill" on the part of a person arrested for assault and battery. Sometimes the police hold persons without charges being filed pending

further developments. For example, one man hits another on the head with a baseball bat. The injured man goes to a hospital in serious condition. If he lives, the charge might be assault and battery or assault with intent to kill. If he dies, the charge might be murder or manslaughter.

### **EXAMPLES**

#### *Disorderly conduct; name and address used; police action*

Clyde R. Potterkins, 707 North Prairie Street, was arrested for disorderly conduct and intoxication Friday night by Blankville police. Potterkins drew a knife in the bleachers at Shamrock Field during the Blankville-Springdale football game. He posted \$22.50 bond for appearance before Police Magistrate Oscar Meany.

#### *Disorderly conduct; "cutting scrape" described; names used*

Charges of disorderly conduct have been filed against Abraham Washington and his wife, Mary Washington, after what police described as a "cutting scrape" Saturday night at their home, 308 North Vine Street.

Washington was taken to Lowell City Hospital for treatment of a knife cut on his chin, which he said his wife inflicted during a quarrel. Both he and his wife were jailed.

When Washington was released on bond, he hurried away to get another \$12.50 as cash bail for his wife. He obtained her release and assured police there were "no hard feelings."

#### *Assault and battery; "wife beating" described; names used*

Anthony O. Adverse, 23-year-old cab driver, was charged with assault and battery Monday after police said he gave his wife a "bad beating" Saturday at their home, 601 West Lincoln Street, Blankville.

Police said they found Mrs. Adverse with both eyes closed from the beating and she told them her husband knocked her down and kicked her. She was taken to Lowell City Hospital for first aid.

Adverse could not be found when officers investigated the fight, but later Sergeant Philip Con and Patrolman Wilber Blank stopped a car which ran through a red light and discovered Adverse driving it.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

After Adverse posted a bond on the traffic charge, he was jailed on the state warrant which was issued by Justice of the Peace Sheldon H. Sheldon. He was in the county jail Monday but authorities said they expected him to post bond later in the day.

### *Assault with intent to kill; details of stabbing; names used*

Perry M. Showme, 53-year-old operator of a restaurant at 980 South Walnut Street, was at liberty Wednesday on \$1,000 bond, pending a hearing on a charge of assault with intent to kill, set for Oct. 3.

Showme is charged with stabbing Lewis H. Waters, 900 North Elm Street, driver of a truck which collided with a car driven by the restaurant operator Monday noon at State and Columbia Streets. Waters has been released from Mercy Hospital.

Police Magistrate Oscar Meany released Showme on bail and set the hearing.

### *Assault with a deadly weapon; attack with a butcher knife*

#### DO NOT WRITE IT LIKE THIS:

Josephine Gallon, 24-year-old Negress, was in the county jail this morning on a charge of assault with a deadly weapon as the aftermath of a stabbing at 7 P.M. Sunday at 934 North Poplar Street.

The victim, Irma Lou Waterfaucet, 22, 1310 West Arlington Street, also colored, was taken to Mercy Hospital, but her injuries were not serious.

Charles "Red" Corless, 46-year-old Negro in whose establishment the stabbing occurred, was arrested by Capt. Rodney Ransom at 8:35 P.M. for allegedly operating a disorderly house. He was released on \$25 cash bond.

The Waterfaucet woman told this story of the incident:

"Arlene Kite and I went to Corless's house and walked into the kitchen where Red and Josephine Gallon were eating.

"I sat down at the table and Josephine Gallon asked me what I was doing. I told her it was none of her business. She then started to argue with me and bit me on the thumb.

"I did not want to fight her so I started to leave the kitchen, but she grabbed a butcher knife from a drawer and slashed me on the back of the neck. I grabbed the knife to keep her from cutting me any more.

"Red grabbed her also. She and I fought and she bit me. During the fight she fell back against a corner of the stove. Arlene and I went across the street and had Laurie Moses call the police."

Authorities said the Gallon woman came here from Slow River, Alabama, three years ago. An unemployed restaurant worker, she lives at 309 South Brady Lane.

#### WRITE IT LIKE THIS:

Josephine Gallon, 24, 309 South Brady Lane, is in the county jail today on a charge of assault with a deadly weapon on Irma Lou Waterfaucet, 22, 1310 West Arlington Street.

The charge was the aftermath of a stabbing at 7 P.M. Saturday, at 394 North Poplar Street.

Irma Lou said Josephine slashed her on the back of the neck with a butcher knife and bit her on the thumb and breast during the fight. She required emergency treatment at Mercy Hospital for her wounds.

After investigating the fight, Police Captain Rodney Ransom arrested Charles "Red" Corless, in whose home the battle occurred, on a charge of maintaining a disorderly house. He posted \$25 bond for appearance before Police Magistrate Oscar Meany.

In the first version of the Gallon-Waterfaucet story the writer uses racial identification in a minor crime story. He presents only one side of the fight. He speaks of the "Gallon woman" and the "Waterfaucet woman." The story takes up more space than it deserves.

### 55. Larceny

There are three main classifications of larceny stories: stories of theft reported to and investigated by police; stories of battles between policemen and robbers, escapes, and capture; and stories of arrest of criminals either at the time of the crime or later.

*Stories of theft reported to and investigated by police should contain* (a) a statement of what was stolen, (b) method of operation of the thief, (c) name and address of the victim or victims, (d) police action, (e) background on similar thefts in the same

community or neighborhood, (f) facts which show carelessness on the part of the victim, as a warning to others, (g) clues police are willing to release, (h) feature angles. A good clear statement of how the crime was committed is vital to the public interest so that citizens will know how to safeguard their property. But the public should not be alarmed unnecessarily. Two purse snatchings do not constitute a "wave of purse snatchings sweeping the city." Nor is a series of robberies a "crime wave." If there are any witnesses to the theft, get their statements and descriptions of the thieves. If statements of witnesses conflict, tell your reader about it.

In stories of robberies the reporter should not use words that depict the robber as a cool, daring person, or in any way characterize him as a hero. Crime should not be made to look easy and attractive. It is better to leave out such information if you cannot tell it calmly.

Be exact in your use of the following terms: thief, robber, burglar, bandit, brigand, outlaw, holdup man, purse snatcher, highwayman, second-story man. If the story concerns a purse snatch, do not call the purse snatcher a burglar, bandit, or brigand. Also if he merely grabs a purse and runs without physically harming his victim do not call him an "assailant" or an "attacker." If the story is about two armed men who hold up a bank, do not call them "armed burglars." A burglar is one who breaks into your home to steal. Bank robbers might correctly be called bandits but not necessarily brigands.

*Stories of battles between police and criminal, accounts of escapes or capture, should contain* (a) nature of the crime; (b) time and place of the battle, capture, or escape; (c) names and identification of criminals involved; (d) names and identification of policemen; (e) why police were on hand; (f) circumstances of the capture or escape; (g) accounts of deaths or wounds of both policemen and criminals; (h) heroic acts of policemen.

*Stories of arrest of persons who are committing or have com-*



*mitted larceny* should contain (a) complete identification of the person or persons arrested; (b) nature of the crime; (c) official charges; (d) circumstances of the arrest; (e) a statement of whether thieves are in jail or out on bond; (f) feature angle, if any.

#### **EXAMPLES**

##### *Jewelry store robbed; method discussed; police action noted*

Watches and other items with a total value of between \$500 and \$1,000 were taken from a display window of the Shooting Star jewelry store, 309 North Ruby Street, in a burglary about 4 A.M. today.

Two bricks were hurled through the plate glass window and the loot was scooped up by a thief or thieves believed to have fled on foot.

Pending the taking of an inventory, Mrs. Barbara A. Seville, owner of the store, said the loss consisted of around eight watches, an inexpensive ring, and a Parker 51 desk set.

First Lieut. Roger Bacon discovered the burglary. Policeman William O. Tell, on duty more than a block distant, reported hearing a person running down a nearby alley about that time. Police had as clues the two bricks which came to rest in the window, and a hat dropped nearby.

##### *Car broken into; how thief operated; value of loss*

James O. James, Springdale, a guest at the Grover Hotel, reported to Blankville police Monday that his car had been broken into and a hearing aid was stolen.

The hearing aid, an electrical audiometer, was valued at \$750. Thieves got into the car by prying open the window ventilator while the vehicle was parked in the hotel parking lot.

##### *Police chase robbers; bystander shot; robbers caught*

Two traffic policemen pursuing two robbers shot an innocent bystander at Cole and Madison Streets shortly before 6 P.M. yesterday, throwing the busy intersection into turmoil.

The robbers were captured a few minutes later.

The bystander shot was J. Wuthering Hites, 39, of Chicago, whose right leg was shattered by a bullet from the pistol of Patrolman Avery Tombsmith. He was taken to Mercy Hospital.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Tombsmith was on duty at Cole Street and Oak Avenue when he was told that two robbers stole a number of suits and overcoats from the tailor shop of Lewis Gifford at 238 North Cole Street. The robbers boarded a southbound streetcar.

Tombsmith, in a taxicab, overtook the streetcar at Cole and Washington Streets. He called Patrolman Ernest Robinhood, on duty there, and the two entered separate doors of the streetcar.

The robbers threw the clothing in Tombsmith's face and ran out the front door. They fled up Cole Street where one headed east and one west in an alley just north of Madison Street.

Tombsmith fired two shots, one of which struck Hites as he came out of the Digger's Hotel, 12 North Cole Street, where he was a guest.

One of the robbers, Edwin J. Ruckus, 26, of 6718 North Cole Street, was caught in front of the Kingfish Hotel. The other, Terry Q. Lee, 33, of 9999 South Wabash Avenue, was caught at Iowa and Madison Streets.

### *Charged with theft of carpenter's level; pleads innocent*

Burr F. Sister, 304 George Street, arrested Monday on a charge of petit larceny, pleaded innocent before County Judge Charles A. Tuff Tuesday morning and was released on \$500 bond.

Complaint for Sister's arrest was signed by Vernon Spooferger, who charges theft of a carpenter's level.

### *Auto theft; thief arrested police action indicated*

Victor A. Morningglory, described as a Camp Johnson soldier, was being held in Springdale Thursday on a charge of stealing a car belonging to Mrs. Emma Lou Yesaw, 600 North Elm Street, Blankville.

Morningglory was arrested early Thursday by state police near Springdale on a charge of driving while intoxicated. Later it was discovered he was driving Mrs. Yesaw's car, which was stolen about 11 p.m. from a parking lot behind the Owen Hotel.

Mrs. Yesaw signed a warrant charging him with the theft, and he is being held for Laurence County authorities after being fined \$100 and costs in Braggart County court for drunken driving.

## **56. Forgery—Embezzlement—Impostors**

Stories of embezzlement, forgery, impersonation of an officer, obtaining money under false pretenses should be reported with complete identification of the wrongdoers, especially if the arrested persons are professional operators in this particular area of crime. In the event the wrongdoer is a well-known local person, the name should not be used until official charges have been filed. Be careful in use of such terms as "bad check artist," "bogus check expert," "forger," and "embezzler." The safest policy is to use straight language by stating the charge in court terminology and then explaining it in simple terms. Say the person is charged with passing worthless checks, not with being a bad check artist, and not with passing "spurious" checks. A lot of your readers won't understand the word "spurious."

Tell your reader what the state statutes say concerning the possible sentence for forgery, embezzlement, etc. In cases where worthless checks are made good by the passer or his relatives and charges are dropped, the best policy is not to use the story. The main benefit to the public from such stories is the warning that forgers, embezzlers, confidence men, etc., are at work in the local community. Also a full knowledge of how the fraud is worked is beneficial to the public. Stories in this general category should contain (a) complete identification; (b) how the forgery, embezzlement, impersonation, etc., was worked; (c) police action; (d) details of how the criminal was caught—unusual aspects of his capture; (e) official charges; (f) sentence possibilities; (g) police record, if any; (h) reason for the masquerade or impersonation.

**Caution:** Do not needlessly embarrass persons deceived by an impostor. It is not necessary to name informers who assist in capture of imposters, forgers, etc., if the informers wish to remain unidentified.

## EXAMPLES

*Bad check charges; check passer identified; method of operation explained*

Blankville merchants were awaiting word today from Blue Sky, Ind., before filing warrants against Alexander Kropootsky, who police in Blankville and the Indiana city say has victimized businessmen in many college towns with worthless checks.

Chief of Police Colin P. Pretty said Kropootsky is wanted in Blankville for passing approximately \$600 worth of bad checks. Dates on the checks indicate he was in the community two days, Sept. 3 and 4.

Pretty said Kropootsky reportedly came to Blankville from an Iowa college town where similar experiences were reported by merchants. Blue Sky authorities, who now have Kropootsky in jail, say his next stop after Blankville was at Saddle Sore, Texas, where Jones-Smith College is located. From there he went to the business district serving the University of Butane at Butane, Okla.

His trail also led to Okmokee University at Seaside, Ind., before he turned to the Konrad University campus at Blue Sky, authorities said.

Blankville merchants promised police today they will ask for warrants if Kropootsky is not held for trial in Indiana. Stories about his activities vary. Lieut. Harold I. Teem said Kropootsky told one Blankville merchant he was in the city to instruct Russian immigrants. One businessman said he carried a student identification card.

The worthless checks passed in Blankville averaged around \$25 each and were drawn on the LaSalle National Bank in Chicago. James A. Figaro, dean of students at Blankville University, aided police in capturing Kropootsky by circulating a warning among other universities.

*United Press embezzlement story; embezzler fully identified; name of girl who aided police not given*

CHICAGO, Oct. 12—(UP)—A \$30-a-week clerk, led into a police trap by the girl he loved, confessed the theft of \$725,880 today and agreed to return to Miami, Fla., "to face the music."

Rodney O. Blank, 22, a corsage box tucked under his arm and a bracelet and diamond engagement ring in his right hand coat pocket, was seized on a downtown street corner when he kept a date with the girl.

At the detective bureau, Blank burst into sobs and confessed taking the money in an effort to win back his fiancée, who had broken her engagement to him.

"I loved her that much," he said simply.

Blank led police to his hotel room and a drop-a-dime railroad station locker, where they recovered nearly \$29,000 in cash and \$697,000 in money orders, which he admitted stealing from an American Express Company branch in Miami. The money orders, police said, were negotiable anywhere in the world.

Police said Blank talked freely of the embezzlement and had expressed willingness to sign extradition papers and return to Miami, where he will be charged with embezzlement, grand larceny, and theft. A hearing probably will take place Monday, police said, and then he will be turned over to Miami authorities.

Blank came to Chicago last week and mapped a campaign to regain his fiancée's love. He invested in a fall outfit—shoes, suit, coat and hat—and bought a new engagement ring and a bracelet and then called the girl and arranged for a date.

She had been contacted by bonding company agents after Blank's disappearance from the Miami express company office and notified police. They were waiting yesterday when the youth stepped up briskly to the girl on the street corner.

He took off his hat. "Long time no see," he began.

Then he felt heavy hands on his shoulder and turned to face two policemen.

"I'm sorry," the girl said, her eyes brimming with tears. She turned and was gone.

Authorities declined to identify the girl, stating she was not involved in the thefts.

*Impersonating a government officer; method of operation  
main part of the story; victims not named*

Wooley, Booley, and Tuff—all three of them—was held to the federal grand jury yesterday on charges of impersonating a government agent.

Wooley, Booley, and Tuff add up, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to Arnold M. Jarboe, 39, ex-convict, who is living at the Y.M.C.A. hotel, 909 South Wabash Avenue.

Jarboe was arrested last Friday after Martin J. Piffle, of 390 South

Whipple Street, saw him apparently about to enter a home across the street from Piffle's house.

Piffle had good reason to remember Jarboe, he told the FBI. He said that on June 2 Jarboe, using the name of Wooley, came to his house, and, pretending to be a deputy collector of internal revenue, told him that he owed \$20 on his 1947 income tax. Piffle paid him \$10 and promised to leave the balance at the internal revenue office.

The FBI charged that Jarboe, under the names of Wooley, Booley, and Tuff, swindled "more than a score" of women out of small amounts of money with a similar "line." The women unanimously described the confidence man who defrauded them as a man "tall, dark, and handsome, with a distinguished mustache."

## **57. Arson—Defacing Public Property—Vandalism**

After most fires reporters can find someone who will give them "definite" information that Mr. or Mrs. Blank set the building on fire to collect the insurance. Such informants always know the exact amount of the insurance to be collected and all of the facts of the arson. Needless to say, this type of information is dangerous and should not be used in the news story. You may quote fire or police officials to the effect that arson is suspected, but don't name anyone until the arrest has been made and official charges filed. The arrest story should contain (a) complete identification of the person arrested; (b) police action leading up to the arrest, how the case was solved; (c) reason for the arson; if known; (d) details about the extent of the fire; (e) court action to be taken.

Stories of vandalism and defacement of public property can tell of damage done by unidentified persons and warnings of police and other city officials that such activities must cease. Or the stories can tell of the arrest of the persons charged with vandalism or defacement of public property. The arrest stories should contain names of persons arrested except in cases where juveniles are involved. (See Chapter Six for policies concerning

use of names of juveniles in crime news.) The arrest story should also contain the kind and amount of the damage done, police action, and the disposition made of the case. Occasionally good feature stories develop out of court action taken against vandals.

### EXAMPLES

*Arson charged; held for grand jury; arsonist confessed but no mention made in newspaper of confession*

Robert J. Firebug, 50, hired hand on the Eric Orlando farm, three miles west of Blankville, is in the Laurence County jail today on a charge of arson.

The arson charge grew out of an investigation of the circumstances of two fires which broke out Sunday in the Orlando home, in which Firebug had lived for more than one year.

Firebug was arrested at 3:30 A.M. Monday by Sheriff Paul J. Souper as he got off the interurban in Blankville after a trip to Springdale.

The first fire broke out in Firebug's room at 2 A.M. Sunday and the second in a downstairs bedroom at 6:30 P.M. With the help of neighbors both blazes were put out before much damage was done.

Firebug is held under \$2,500 bond subject to action by the grand jury. He waived preliminary hearing.

*Feature story on what happened to a defacer of public property*

Under the watchful eyes of Judge John M. Hardy, Richard Goattee took on the duties of a scrubwoman yesterday.

The 23-year-old apprentice painter was fulfilling a promise made an hour earlier in Town Hall Court.

On his hands and knees, he was taking off the paint job he had applied with such loving care on the rocks of the breakwater at Judgment Avenue.

Goattee, who lives at 1010 North Sunset Street, was caught in the act last Saturday by Park Policeman Dunby Mihand and charged with defacing public property.

In bold white letters he had painted "Goattee's Band" along with the names of more than a dozen of his pals.

Beside his own name was the misspelled word "Private."

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

The judge, his white hair ruffled by the lake breeze, asked sympathetically, "You won't do it again, will you, Buster?"

Goattee said "No," as he worked vigorously with scrub brush and paint remover.

### *Vandalism; vandals unidentified; damage described*

Blankville police Saturday were searching for a vandal or vandals who broke into Rhubbarb's Piano Shop, 56 North Main Street, Friday night and damaged several pianos, scattered varnish on the floor, and bent or broke several tools.

Hammers were yanked out of the pianos, keys broken, and a radio-phonograph combination was smashed on the floor. Lincoln Todd, owner of the shop, estimated the damage at \$250 if the pianos can be repaired, or \$500 to \$600 if not.

Todd blamed the vandalism on "kids or a drunk. I hope nobody's that mad at me," he added.

## **58. Murder—Manslaughter**

The reporter should not use the word "murdered" as a synonym for "slain" or "killed." In the following lead the word "murdered" is used incorrectly:

Miss Winnie Mae Corn, 50-year-old Blankville schoolteacher, was found dead Saturday night on the back porch of her home at 905 West Lincoln Avenue. Police authorities said she had been murdered by stabbing.

In the above lead the word "killed" should have been used instead of "murdered." Do not say that Mr. Blank was arrested for murdering his mother-in-law. If an official charge of murder has been filed against him, it would be proper for the reporter to say that Mr. Blank had been arrested on a charge of murder, or that he had been charged with the murder of his mother-in-law. The word "murder" has a legal meaning which the reporter must understand. Do not use the word "murder" until a jury has convicted a person of murder or until an official charge has been made before a judge.



The general term "homicide" is used to describe the act of one person killing another. When a policeman kills a person in line of duty, or in self-defense, he has committed justifiable homicide. If there is no justification for the slaying, he has committed felonious homicide. Felonious homicide may be either murder or manslaughter, according to the circumstances of the killing. The charge will ordinarily be "first-degree murder" if there was criminal intention and if the crime was planned ahead of time. Second-degree murder might be charged if the killing was not planned ahead of time but there was intent to kill at the moment the blow was struck or the shot fired. Manslaughter is either "voluntary" or "involuntary." Involuntary manslaughter will be charged when death results from a person's recklessness or negligence. Voluntary manslaughter is charged when the homicide is committed in great anger or as the result of extreme provocation. A father who saw a motorist run over and kill his small daughter might be charged with voluntary manslaughter if he shot and killed the motorist. Occasionally both murder and manslaughter will be charged until more is known about the case.

Where the slaying is linked with the activities of an unfaithful wife or husband descriptions of the "love nest" and the rumpled bed are best left unwritten. Such details serve only to feed the sex-conscious minds of adolescents and adolescent-minded grown-ups.

Murder and manslaughter news is important to the community since homicide is one of the most serious of all crimes. The reader will be interested in knowing (a) who was killed (use full identification); (b) when the crime was committed; (c) who the killer was (complete identification, if man has been identified); (d) what led to the killing (passions, accident, intent, negligence, carelessness); (e) police action; (f) solution of the crime; (g) statements of witnesses; (h) court charge; (i) unusual or significant angles.

## EXAMPLES

### *Proper use of word "murder"; circumstances of killing told*

A quarrel between two brothers that began in the Ox Horn tavern here ended in a woodland shotgun duel in which one of them was fatally wounded yesterday.

Louis A. Rye, 23, the younger brother who emerged unhurt from the duel, is in jail here. Prosecutor John B. Oats said an affidavit charging murder would be filed in order that the youth might be held for a grand jury investigation into the death of the older brother, Walter Lamar Rye, 27.

The prosecutor, after visiting Springdale, home of the Rye brothers, said he was told they quarreled over whether to take home a case of beer and a case of pop ordered by their father, Elmer Rye, or leave it at the tavern until their father's return.

The prosecutor said he found no witnesses to the shooting but from two sisters of the duelists he gathered this story:

The brothers came home within a few minutes of each other early yesterday. Each took a shotgun and they went into a wood lot nearby.

Several shots were fired and then the sisters heard the older brother cry out, "You got me, Bud."

The younger brother then came into the house and said: "I got him; call an ambulance."

The following terminology is used to describe the status of the case following the arrest of a killer:

Ford H. Barley, *charged with the murder of his wife, Lucy . . .*

Laurence County Prosecutor Wallace M. Wheat said he would *file formal charges today* against a 52-year-old Blankville housewife who he said had signed a statement that she killed her semi-invalid husband. . . .

District Attorney Howard Avery Bean of Blankville said last night he *would issue a warrant charging Effie Mae Germ, 26, with first-degree murder* in the slaying yesterday. . . .

Mrs. Gulf, tearful and at times hysterical, *was booked by police for investigation of murder.* . . .

Mrs. Mildred Planet, 22, *was being held in jail on a charge of poisoning with intent to kill* her 24-year-old husband. . . .

Mrs. Jardine O. Snoop, 59-year-old school-bus driver, who is *charged with the poison murder of . . .*

## **59. Kidnaping, Abduction—Extortion—Blackmail**

Newspapers do not attempt to distinguish between kidnaping and abducting although they are listed as separate offenses in many states. Strictly speaking abduction means the carrying off of a woman or child and kidnaping means the detention of anyone against his will. Newspapers sometimes use both words in the same lead, as follows:

Police and sheriff's deputies said today they "fear the worst" in the kidnaping of blond, 3-year-old Martha Worstbottle, abducted by a maid who may be insane.

The word "abducted" is often used when the case concerns the taking away of a child by its own mother or father under circumstances like those discussed in the following story:

Mrs. Harriet Wilco and her son Roger, Jr., 3 years old, were held at the women's lockup of the Detective Bureau in Blankville after being met today at a train at the request of Sheriff Harvey Littlejohn of Springdale.

The police in Blankville were notified by radio after the child was abducted from his grandparents' home at Springdale, Sheriff Littlejohn said.

He reported that the grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Wilco, told him Roger has been living with them for the last two years since he was abandoned by the mother in a Springfield hotel. She has been living in Coon Hollow since her divorce a year ago.

The reporter should cooperate with police authorities in handling details of a kidnaping. If it is feared that publication of certain facts will bring harm to the kidnaped person, those facts should be withheld until there is no danger. In many cases newspaper publicity has brought about the return of a kidnaped person or has led to capture of the kidnapers and the release of the kidnaped person.

The following distinction should be made between extortion and blackmail. Extortion is the general term covering any attempt to obtain money by threats of violence and blackmail is a special form of extortion by which a person attempts to obtain money by promising not to reveal something about a person that he does not wish known. Stories involving these crimes should contain (a) identification of the person attempting blackmail or extortion; (b) identification of the victim or victims; (c) police action; (d) method of operation of the criminal; (e) police officials involved; (f) court action; (g) past record of the criminal, if any.

**Caution:** Cooperate with police authorities the same as in kidnaping cases to prevent harm to individuals and to facilitate capture of the criminal.

#### EXAMPLE

##### *Extortion attempt revealed after capture of the criminal*

Gregory J. MacClonkle, 25, of Blankville, was held under \$10,000 bail yesterday after his arraignment before United States Commissioner Lucas L. Turtle on a charge of attempting to extort \$3,000 from a Blankville restaurant owner under threat of kidnaping.

Oscar B. Bigjohn, special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation office in Capital City, said MacClonkle sent a threatening letter to Burton K. Whistlethwait, the restaurant owner, ordering him to leave the money at a place agents refused to disclose.

Bigjohn said agents seized MacClonkle when he arrived at the designated place.

## 60. Smuggling—Counterfeiting

In the majority of instances the reporter will not be able to get news of smuggling and counterfeiting until the case has been "cracked," especially if a "ring" of smugglers or counterfeiters is in operation. Premature exposure of police activities sometimes is harmful to the successful completion of a case. When fake

money is found being circulated in a community, the public should know about it, however. Police authorities will usually release such information without revealing what they are doing or what clues they have found. Stories of arrest of counterfeiters should contain (a) names and other identification of persons arrested; (b) official charges; (c) criminal activities of those arrested; (d) how the counterfeiters operated in the community; (e) police action and how the case was solved; (f) court action.

### **EXAMPLE**

#### *Arrest of counterfeiters; criminals identified; methods exposed*

Three men, believed to be members of a gang of counterfeiters who have been passing bogus \$10 bills here, yesterday were ordered held under bonds of \$7,000 each by U.S. Commissioner Earle E. Elephant.

A fourth man, said to be the ringleader, was seized Tuesday night after he was implicated by the others. He was scheduled for a court appearance late today.

The three are George Doe, 22, of 1999 Taylor Street; Thomas Tow, 23, of 300 South Myrtle Avenue; and Burton Low, 22, of 800 West Euclid Avenue. They are charged with possession and passing of counterfeit money.

The case was continued to Sept 10 on the request of defense attorneys.

Doe and Tow were arrested Tuesday for a traffic violation. The Warren Avenue police found 32 phony bills in the automobile.

The two implicated Low, and admitted they had passed some of the bills with the knowledge that they were bogus. Later they accused Hugo Hagan, 46, of 187 South Lotus Street, as the man from whom they obtained the bills.

## **61. Crime Prevention**

From the standpoint of responsibility, as well as public interest, newspapers today are devoting more and more space to stories of crime prevention and cure of criminal tendencies in human beings. The modern reporter must be familiar with the role psy-

chiatry is now playing in determining treatment for criminals rather than punishment. To show the public how society has failed to rehabilitate a criminal the reporter must make his story of the crime a kind of case history. This calls for more investigation than a mere glance at the police blotter or a court record or a few words with police authorities. Such stories should coordinate and crystallize the following information: (a) home background of the criminal; (b) early life of crime; (c) early punishments set by courts and what they led to; (d) any efforts made to rehabilitate the criminal and why they failed; (e) most recent crime and what is to be done about it.

Under this same general heading of crime prevention come the news stories portraying the criminal as a person who "cannot win." They preach the sermon that "crime does not pay." Certainly if the reader is to draw a lesson from facts or interpretation of facts, it is better that he come to the conclusion that crime does not pay than that it is a glory road. Stories of this type are usually written around messages or statements of criminals who are about to die or who are entering prison for the rest of their lives. Or they may show the criminal after his arrest as a miserable, cowardly kind of person. Let the facts speak for themselves. Do not intentionally color or slant your story in any given direction.

#### EXAMPLE

CHICAGO, Sept. 9—(AP)—Ernest Gaither, Jr., 23-year-old Negro who says he never worked, always had lots of money and was "tough" and a "bigshot," has written a message to "boys," warning them against a career of crime.

Gaither, who is scheduled to die in the electric chair Friday morning, handed a crudely penciled note to Warden Frank Sain yesterday after the Illinois Supreme Court declined to stay the execution. He was convicted of slaying a liquor store owner in a \$300 holdup last Feb. 9.

In his note, Gaither related he was a holdup man at 16 and "boss of a gang of tough guys. Two or three grand on me all times." Of

the eight in the gang, seven are in prison and one died in the electric chair.

He wrote he had been sentenced to reform school, escaped; was sentenced to prison, and served more than five years. Six months after he was paroled in June 1946 he was head of another gang of robbers.

"Any fool can put a gun in his hand and do wrong," Gaither said in his message. "Easy money is no good. It come easy, it go easy. It takes a man with guts to get a job and work for what he want.

"The law will get you if you don't get that jive out of your head that you can make crimes pay. I am just sorry that I couldn't see it this way until it was too late altho my life will be taking from me but soul is going to rest with God in heaven. That will be my next home, and I am happy that I am ready to go."

## **62. Confessions**

Two problems confront the reporter when he wishes to use a confession in his crime news story. Problem one is how to use the confession and not "try" the accused in the newspaper, and problem number two is how not to place his newspaper in the position of saying a person has "confessed" when there is, in fact, no confession. Here are a few suggestions:

a. Do not accept at full value statements involving "confessions" or admissions of guilt by accused persons unless these do in fact exist and can, in case of necessity, be produced.

b. Be careful to distinguish between "confessed" and "admitted." Use confessed to mean a signed statement that can be produced. Use admitted to mean an oral statement to police authorities, a statement before witnesses. An admission can be indicated indirectly by saying that the accused "told Police Lieutenant John Appleseed he cut his wife with a knife."

c. In all sentences explaining a confession, admission, or statement of guilt tell your reader how the confession was made. For example:

Benjamin A. Rooster, 21-year-old Blankville youth, walked into the

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Laurence County sheriff's office Monday morning and *told calmly how he had killed pretty Emma Diesel*. . . .

Torrenz *admitted the burglaries*, then *told Capt. John A. Tonsil* . . .

Chief of Detectives Robert Fagan *said the woman admitted kidnapping the child* from the home of the parents. . . .

*Breaking under five days of questioning*, King O. Kong, 25, a rookie policeman, *confessed today*. Chief Joseph Early said he shot and killed . . .

. . . *who signed a statement* that "an urge to kill" led him . . .

. . . who yesterday confessed the apparently motiveless slaying of his 19-year-old girl friend, *had made a substantial statement*, saying . . .

Roberts (county sheriff) said the second statement was made to him and two assistant state's attorneys after intensive questioning of the youth. The sheriff said the youth would sign the statement later today.

d. Do not say a person "confessed to robbing the First National Bank." He confesses to someone, not to a crime. It is proper to say that he confessed the killing of his mother-in-law.

e. Be cautious in using such terms as "truth serum" and "lie detectors." The reader should be told exactly what kind of device was used. There are a number of different kinds of so-called "lie detectors," and the truth serum is merely a drug that causes some persons to drop their defenses and talk freely. Results from such devices are not allowable as evidence in court but oftentimes they can be used to obtain information that will bring confessions from the accused. Do not treat results from lie detectors and truth serums as final of themselves.



**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER SIX

# *Reporting Juvenile Delinquency*

63. The Arrest Story	129
64. The Court Story	131
65. Terminology	133
66. Contributing to the Delinquency of Minors	133
67. Illegal Nursing Homes—Abandonment of Children— Sale of Children	134

American newspapers have found that the reporting of juvenile delinquency involves a number of particularly tough problems. No newspaper seems to have arrived at a perfect way to handle such stories and many of them have changed their policies from one extreme to another. For example, about 25 per cent of nearly three hundred newspapers surveyed never report the names of juveniles involved in police charges or juvenile delinquency of any kind. This policy is expressed by the Indianapolis (Ind.) *Star*: "Under no circumstances does the *Star* use the names of juveniles in crime news. Every effort is made to spare parents and friends when representing news of juvenile crime. The *Star* maintains the attitude that the parents already are subjected to enough grief and humiliation without having the names of their children emblazoned in the newspaper."

The opposite viewpoint is taken by the Waterloo (Iowa) *Daily Courier*: "We believe that both the juveniles and their parents are frequently more concerned about the publicity than they are about the punishment the court may deal out. If a youngster is a repeater or has engaged in a series of crimes, it is our belief that it is more than a 'childish prank' and that the publicity is part of the punishment."

The big problem that seems to be undecided is whether publicity in juvenile cases will help or hinder the decrease of juvenile delinquency. In trying to find a "middle of the road" policy that will help solve this problem many newspapers have developed practices that hinge upon the age, number of offenses, and seriousness of the crime committed by the juvenile. These practices are indicated below.

### **63. The Arrest Story**

Where there is no state law prohibiting the use of names of juveniles in arrest stories, generally the names should not be used in the following instances:

a. When the juvenile is seventeen years of age or under. Some newspapers place the age at eighteen and others go as low as fourteen. Sometimes the practice is different for boys and girls, the age for boys being sixteen and for girls seventeen. If you have a story involving two eighteen-year-old boys and one seventeen-year-old boy, the practice is to use the names of the older boys and not the name of the seventeen-year-old.

b. When the juvenile is a first offender, if the offense is not a felony.

Names of juvenile offenders and details of their crimes will be used in the following instances:

a. Regardless of age if the juvenile is a "repeater." This may mean a second offender or third or fourth, according to the seriousness of the offense.

b. Regardless of age if the crime is homicide or any serious felony.

c. Regardless of age if the juvenile is arrested under extremely public circumstances where it is impossible to hide his identity.

d. Regardless of age if the juvenile escapes from a reformatory or school for juvenile delinquents.

e. Regardless of age where failure to use the name will cause the public to distrust a number of innocent juveniles with whom the guilty boy or girl works. The only other solution to this kind of situation is not to use the story at all.

#### **EXAMPLES**

*Two youths arrested for vandalism; names not used; first offense*

Two Blankville boys, 11 and 12 years old, will appear with their parents before Chief of Police Hanson Samson at the Blankville sta-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

tion Saturday morning to discuss charges of breaking street light globes. The boys were arrested about 8 P.M. yesterday.

Police Magistrate Paul Willowist said today the epidemic of light-globe breaking in Blankville is only partially to be blamed on teen-age youth and younger children. Recent reports have been received from witnesses who have seen unidentified persons leap into an automobile and drive away after smashing globes.

Chief Samson has issued repeated warnings that the Blankville police are determined to catch persons responsible for the abnormally high breakage of globes. Fines up to \$300 will be asked, he said.

### *Stolen car story; 13-year-old involved; name not used; first offense*

A 13-year-old Blankville youth was caught in a stolen car late Wednesday afternoon after a wild chase in which he lost control of the car and overturned it when police fired at the tires.

Later, he and a 14-year-old friend admitted stealing six cars in the last ten days, driving them after school hours, and then abandoning them on the streets. No charges were filed against the pair pending conferences between their parents and State's Attorney George W. Migglesnore. Police said it was the first trouble with the law for both boys.

The car which was overturned belonged to Edwin A. Snoopster of Springdale, and had been stolen a short time before on Burlap Avenue on the University of Blankville campus.

### *Stolen car story; names of juveniles are used; youths are "repeaters"*

Delinquency information was filed against Coy M. McCoy, 15, Route 3, Blankville, in county court Friday by James A. Snork, state's attorney. Hearing on the information was set for Wednesday in county court before Judge Curtiss B. Boken.

McCoy was arrested with three other youths Wednesday in connection with the theft of two automobiles Monday night in Blankville and Springdale. One of the automobiles was destroyed by fire when it overturned near Coon Hollow on Route 45 as two of the youths drove toward Blankville.

McCoy's companions, Richard Rover, 18, 1230 West Muslin Street; Hargo M. Hill, 18, 209 East Lane Avenue, and Tolliver A. Pine, 18, Springdale, are being held in county jail, at the request of authorities of the Hilltop School for Boys from which they are on parole.

All four of the boys have been bound over to the grand jury on automobile theft charges.

#### **64. The Court Story**

If juveniles are identified in the arrest story there is no point in concealing their identity in the court story unless state law forbids such publicity. Where such laws exist the identification should not be used in the arrest story. A majority of the newspapers surveyed reported the following practice: If the case is tried in a juvenile court or if the juvenile is tried as a "youthful offender," no publicity is given the case; if the case moves to a criminal court, full publicity and complete identification follow. In states where there are no laws dictating whether juvenile trials shall be public or private, newspapers generally follow the same policies for court stories that they use for arrest stories.

Typical of the state laws governing the publication of proceedings of juvenile trials is the Children's Court Act of the State of New York which has been in effect since 1922. Section 45 of the Act indicates that newspapers shall not be allowed to report proceedings of the court or have access to the records:

In a hearing of any case, coming within the provisions of this act, the general public shall be excluded and only such persons and the representatives of authorized agencies admitted thereto as have a direct interest in the case.

The county shall provide a separate place for the filing of all papers in a manner similar to filing papers of a county court. All such records may be withheld from indiscriminate public inspection in the discretion of the judge, but such records shall be open to inspection by the parent, guardian, next friend or attorney of the child. Any authorized agency to which a child is committed may examine the record of investigation and may in the discretion of the court obtain a copy of the whole or a part of such record.

In addition to the Children's Court Act New York has a youthful offenders statute which provides that youths sixteen,

seventeen, and eighteen years of age, with no previous felony conviction, charged with a felony other than one punishable by death or by life imprisonment, shall be dealt with as youthful offenders. Such proceedings are private and court records are not open to public inspection.

#### EXAMPLES

*Names of juvenile offenders not used in arrest story; names not used in court story*

Bonds were fixed Wednesday at \$3,000 each for five youths of the Springdale area who are being held in Laurence County jail after police authorities uncovered clues to a series of thefts and burglaries during the past month.

The youths signed statements admitting burglaries at two oil stations and two junk yards.

All in their teens, the boys are being held on charges of the burglary of filling stations at Mansville and Coon Hollow, the Reed Brothers junk yard in Blankville and a Springdale junk yard. Police Magistrate Easy O. Earle has set their hearing for 1 P.M. Dec. 19.

*Juveniles charged with armed robbery; names used in arrest and court stories*

Five or six members of the "black car gang" charged with a series of armed robberies on Blankville's northwest side, have been sentenced to prison, and a sixth has been placed on probation.

All pleaded guilty to the charges.

The heaviest sentences—10 to 14 years each on two charges of assault with intent to kill—were given to Richard Schultzimer, 15, and Argus Panhandle, 17. They were also sentenced to one year to life on each of the armed robbery charges, 14 against Schultzimer and 12 against Panhandle. The sentences will be served concurrently.

Both Schultzimer and Panhandle had been sentenced in Bowed Oxen, Ky., on August 10 to serve one to 20 years on each of two counts of automobile theft.

Others sentenced by Judge Oscar DeVroom were William Rattail, 21, five to 10 years each on four charges of robbery, sentences concurrent; Elgin Watchill, 16, three to seven years on each of five robbery



charges, sentences concurrent; James Frogman, 17, two to four years on each of four robbery charges, sentences concurrent; Walter Portside, 18, probation for three years on one robbery charge.

## **65. Terminology**

A number of newspapers have policies of not using the same terminology for juvenile delinquency court stories that they use for stories of proceedings against adults. For example, under such policies juveniles are never "sentenced" to the reformatory or boys' school. They are "committed." All terms that connote imprisonment or jail are avoided. In cases where the juveniles actually are sentenced to a state prison, as in the above example, say so.

## **66. Contributing to the Delinquency of Minors**

As a general rule newspapers do not identify minors who have been led into lives of crime by adults unless the minors are children of the adults. When parents contribute to the delinquency of their own children the children are indirectly identified when the parents are named. News stories of this general type should contain:

- a. Names of persons who are charged with contributing to delinquency of minors, but not the names of the minors.
- b. Circumstances of the arrest.
- c. Statement by the person or persons arrested.
- d. Previous record of arrests for similar offenses, if any.
- e. Any facts which indicate bad local conditions.
- f. Charges made against the minors, if any.

**Caution:** Confine story to official charges and the reasons for them as revealed by police authorities. If the story concerns sex delinquency, limit the details to a brief statement of what happened.

**EXAMPLE**

*Morals charge; girl not named; adults fully identified*

An itinerant farm laborer from Arkansas and a 65-year-old restaurant worker were held today by Blankville police on charges of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Chrystofer Cartilege, 24, of Nicetown, Ark., is alleged to have had intimate relations Thursday night with a 15-year-old girl in a room on the fourth floor of the Seaview Hotel.

Alexander Gopher, 65, listed as a resident of the hotel and described by the girl as "my boss," is accused by police of having registered the young woman and Cartilege as man and wife and paid for the room with money obtained from the farm laborer.

Policemen Largo A. Ulcers, Clifton A. Fatman and Harold O. Teems arrested the two men and the girl at 1:15 A.M. Friday in the hotel after hotel officials had become suspicious.

**67. Illegal Nursing Homes—Abandonment of  
Children—Sale of Children**

Occasionally someone makes a study of how the newspaper reports "social" news, that is, news of social ills, and then announces that such reporting in general is superficial. The conclusion is based, the student will say, on the fact that the newspaper makes a great to-do about specific cases and often brings relief in specific cases without pointing out the source of the trouble. For example, a husband and wife abandon their three children because they do not have food to give them. The newspaper prints the story, calling attention to the sad financial condition of the parents. Immediately they are flooded with money; the father gets several job offers, and the mother goes to the hospital for a needed operation so she will regain the strength that she needs to take care of her children. While it is true that this type of reporting does not solve the financial troubles of all parents who have starving children, often newspaper stories of

specific social ills result in public action aimed at the cause of a generally bad condition.

Thus, in the case of news of illegal nursing homes, abandonment of children, and sale of children to adoption syndicates, the reporter can be of great public service by revealing all of the facts concerning these social ills. He may deal with specific cases but he can do most good by indicating general conditions that need correcting.

The news story about an unlicensed or generally unlawful nursing home should contain (a) names and other identification of the operators; (b) conditions found in the home; (c) official charges made against the operators; (d) circumstances of the arrest; (e) action taken concerning the persons found in the unlawful nursing home; (f) ages, mental condition, and sex of those living in the home; (g) court action, if any; and (h) background on similar conditions found elsewhere in the community.

**Caution:** Do not say anything concerning conditions in the home that you cannot prove. Use specific authority for statements concerning conditions in the home. Avoid the use of such terms as "torture chambers" and "house of horrors" when describing conditions. Instead tell accurately and simply what was seen.

In stories of abandonment or sale of children for adoption tell your reader (a) names of the parents, if known, except in cases of unwed mothers; (b) reason for the abandonment or sale; (c) circumstances of the abandonment—how and where; (d) police action; (e) what happened to the children; (f) ages of the children; (g) charges made by police; and (h) statements of the parents.

**Caution:** In many cases of abandonment of babies by unwed mothers, where the identity of the mother becomes known, the newspaper does not use the name of the mother in the hope that the situation can be handled by social welfare workers so that a happy home will result.

## EXAMPLES

### *Unlicensed nursing home; operator identified; conditions told*

Five small children, dirty and neglected, were removed from an unlicensed private nursing home after authorities arrested the 29-year-old woman operator, police said today.

Police said the youngsters, ranging in age from one to eight, had scratches and bruises on their bodies. The children were taken to a county orphanage.

Mrs. Hilda Lou Hardrock, the operator, said she couldn't remember the names of some of their parents who paid her two dollars a day to board the tots.

Policewoman Martha Doublestubble said Mrs. Hardrock admitted whipping the children "but never very hard."

The operator was held on a charge of operating a nursing home without a license. She was scheduled to be arraigned in a municipal court later today.

The raid on the home was the second in Blankville within the past week. Laurence County Prosecutor Donald Blueboy led a raid last Monday on a nursing home operated by Mrs. Madora Mumpus and found aged and mental patients shackled to beds. Mrs. Mumpus and her son face malicious mayhem, assault, and unlicensed operations charges.

"I have whipped all of the children but I never have hurt them," Mrs. Hardrock said. "I never whipped them except to correct them."

Police said one of the youngsters had a painful burn on his mouth. The boy, Wesley Banefall, 8, said he was burned while playing with a cigarette lighter.

Mollie Faggin, 4, had a cut finger she hurt on a nail, she said. Sue, Mollie's three-year-old sister, said she had been whipped with a long switch.

Mrs. Hardrock said she had been operating a nursery home for two months. She said she had "never bothered" to fill out an application for a license.

### *Children abandoned in church; parents identified*

Figaro Pompadore, 26, and his wife, Emmaline, 24, who abandoned their three small sons Sunday in Holy Name Cathedral, were arrested yesterday.

## *Reporting Juvenile Delinquency*

Questioned at the Blankville police station, they said the housing situation was the cause of all their troubles.

The children are Euripides, 4, Plato, 3, and Cornelius, 1. After they were found the older boys were taken to the Juvenile Home and the baby was left at St. Agnes Orphanage.

Yesterday the parents claimed Euripides and Plato, and removed them to a foster home at 1918 Washington Avenue. Acting on a tip, the police arrested the parents in a movie at 894 South Star Lane.

Mrs. Pompadore recently had worked there as a ticket seller, and had entered the place with her husband to collect a pay check.

"We didn't think we had done anything wrong," they told police.

Pompadore, an unemployed baker, said the last two and a half years the family's search for a home had taken them to California, Florida, Canada, and Mexico. At one time he said they spent four days in the Blankville Union Station.

Until last week the children were being cared for in a foster home while the parents lived in one room at 3769 Wilmington Avenue. Then they were told they must take the children back.

On Sunday they tried to place the children in St. Agnes Orphanage, but were turned down. The Main Street police referred them to the Salvation Army, but they found it was closed. Then it began to rain, and the cathedral was handy.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *Watching Your Step*

### 68. Reporting Principles

Out of the mills of reporting experience have come a number of practical safeguards against libel suits and breaches of standards of good taste. While it does not pay off in increased public service for the reporter and the newspaper to be too cautious, good standards of practice are necessary for accuracy, fairness and public responsibility. The following "dos" and "don'ts" summarize most of the principles cited in these pages:

## **68. Reporting Principles**

### *Tell story with facts*

1. Make no assertions against any person's conduct or character unless you are ready to supply complete legal evidence.

2. Do not draw conclusions adverse to conduct or character. Never depart from the plain facts. Let the facts tell the whole story.

3. Be sure the wrong person is not made to appear. This is often done, either by slips in writing names or mistakes about identity of persons involved. Get every name, residence, and occupation absolutely right.

4. Be careful about using names given by unknown persons. It is a common practice for criminals and other delinquents to assume the names of respectable persons.

5. Never copy dangerous phrases or libelous charges from other papers. Your paper will be held equally responsible.

6. Quoting from a scurrilous circular or letter or any document is not privileged even though an arrest may have been made. In using the libelous language of a printed article you place yourself and the paper in the same position as the person who printed or circulated it.

7. Never use an epithet such as "swindler," "embezzler," "rascal," "cheat," "liar," "thief," "murderer," until the person accused has been tried and convicted and sentence executed.

## *Watching Your Step*

8. Be careful about reporting business failures or embarrassments.
9. Stories affecting professional repute of doctors, lawyers, preachers, and others dependent upon personal esteem are dangerous.
10. Remember: (a) that no news article is valuable enough to compensate for a libel suit; (b) that even though the person libeled is not named, he may recover damages if it can be shown that the story, by designating his house, his club, his place of business, or describing his appearance, peculiarities, haunts, or habits, points him out so clearly as to make his identity unmistakable.

—Buffalo (N.Y.) *Courier-Express*

### *Accuracy alone is no protection*

1. Accuracy alone is not a protection against libel. But in general a fair and accurate report of any news of public interest is not dangerous.
2. When in doubt, consider whether the story ever would be missed. Usually it wouldn't, but if it appears essential, write it safely, accurately, and fairly.

—*Canadian Press*

### *Watch ex-parte statements*

1. Guard against using ex-parte statements without giving those involved an opportunity to present their side of the story or case.
2. Confessions that involve criminal or libelous charges are used only when the authority for them is attributed to a privileged source or privileged official who has the confidence of the reporter, or when otherwise confirmed.
3. Never assume a thing to be true, especially if it involves handling news which reflects upon the person involved or has a possible libelous twist. Verify it. Thinking something is true, or even knowing it to be true, is not enough unless you can, when called upon to do so, prove in a court of law that it is true absolutely as you wrote it.

—Buffalo (N.Y.) *Evening News*

### *Two sides to every story*

1. It is highly important to remember always that there are at least two sides to every story. It is not enough to get only one side. Give all persons concerned in the story a chance to say what they will.
2. Remember the newspaper is not acting in the capacity of judge. It merely carries to the public the information of which it is positive.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

3. In every controversial story the reporter should talk personally with the persons concerned, if it is at all possible. He should not use the telephone in such cases.

—Waterbury (Conn.) *Republican*

### *Watch names*

1. The use of "alleged" does not make a statement less libelous.
2. Confusing complainant and defendant has caused many libel suits. Watch names.
3. Omitting the name of the person accused is no insurance against libel if it is possible from the description to make a reasonably sure identification.

—New Bedford (Mass.) *Standard-Times*

### *When in doubt—leave it out*

1. If there is any doubt about the facts in a story, leave them out.
2. In writing about a person appearing in court, be sure that person appears.
3. Use "pleaded innocent" instead of "pleaded not guilty."
4. Do not use reports of marriages, births, etc., unless completely authenticated.

—Binghamton (N.Y.) *Press*

### *Be specific*

1. When writing critically about governments, peoples, or classes, be discriminating. Do not indict an entire race, creed, or nation for the acts of a few. Be specific. Don't generalize.

*The wrong way:* The Germans have demonstrated how little they care for the rights of others.

*The right way:* "The Nazi government has demonstrated, etc."

*The wrong way:* Lawyers expect to collect fat fees as the result of the newly discovered loophole.

*The right way:* Those lawyers who resort to ambulance chasing expect, etc.

New York *World-Telegram*

### *Watch unserved warrants*

1. Anything carries danger of libel which, if said about yourself,

you would feel reflected on your character or reputation, unless it is privileged.

2. It is privileged only if said in an open session of a legislative body, in a court if admitted to the record (but beware of testimony which the judge rules out), or if contained in papers filed for public view with an official.

3. Quoting a policeman, judge, or other official is no protection.

4. A person has not been legally charged with a crime until he is actually under arrest for it. Usually, but not always, this means through a warrant. Beware of warrants for arrest which have been sworn out but not served. Many a libel suit has resulted from unserved warrants.

5. Watch out for anything a lawyer says which has not been stated in open court, or is not contained in a paper actually filed with the clerk of the court and become a part of the record.

6. A person is not a criminal until found guilty.

7. "Suspect" as a noun is a dangerous word. After having carefully said a man is "held for questioning" don't throw caution to the winds later by calling him a "suspect."

—The Gannett Newspapers, *Libel in a Nutshell*

*Be sure it's provably true*

1. Beware of statements by public officials, prosecuting attorneys, civic organizations and press releases of government bureaus. Ordinarily they are not privileged. Whether they are dangerous is another thing, depending upon their content. To say that "a high police official said" means that you are making the accusation. Ordinarily, circumstances do not warrant any more than a statement that a crime has been committed and that the police are holding whoever it may be for questioning. While such a statement is not privileged, it is reasonably safe, because it is provably true.

2. There is no privilege attached to preliminary investigations by police, public officials or bureaus, not only to the official action resulting therefrom. Likewise, there is no privilege in reports of secret proceedings.

3. If it is decided that a name should be withheld from a crime story, be certain that no damaging descriptive phrases are given. "An elderly janitor of a nearby apartment house" could lead to a suit from every elderly janitor in the neighborhood.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

4. A newspaper or a radio station is not a competent authority for potentially dangerous material.

5. Federal prisoners often are placed in county jails. But that doesn't mean that county officials can be quoted about them. Get information on federal prisoners and federal charges from federal officials.

—A.P. *Reference Book*

**Summary of \_\_\_\_\_ Libel Law**  
state

**Summary of** \_\_\_\_\_ **Libel Law**  
state



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *“And Sudden Death”*

69. Fires	150
70. Air Accidents	151
71. Automobile Accidents	154
72. Natural Disasters	159
73. Drownings	161
74. Industrial Accidents	163
75. Railroad Accidents	164
76. Marine Accidents	167
77. Accidental Shootings	168
78. Explosions—Mine Accidents	169
79. Electrocutions—Asphyxiations	172

Through the reporting of accidents and disasters newspapers have become great record books of man's carelessness and heroism, his recklessness and his kindness of heart. The record must be kept clear and true so that it may serve as a "stop sign" against waste of human life.

## **69. Fires**

The fire story should contain (a) deaths; (b) injuries; (c) amount of damage; (d) cause of the fire; (e) how the fire was discovered and reported; (f) how much of loss covered by insurance; (g) work of firemen; (h) rescues; (i) escapes; (j) eyewitness accounts; (k) investigations; (l) complete identification of the building or buildings damaged; (m) how long firemen fought the fire; (n) information revealing the size of the fire as compared with others in the community; (o) disposition of the dead and injured; (p) danger to nearby property; (q) time of the fire; (r) fire equipment used at the fire; (s) statements of fire officials; (t) statements of building owners.

In fire stories do not use nauseating words or expressions like "burned to a crisp," "gutted," and "badly decomposed." Use simple words like "fire," "flames," and "blaze" instead of "conflagration" and "holocaust." Do not use statements in which certain persons are accused of setting fire to a building. Identify as specifically as possible all persons who make statements concerning the cause of the fire. Do not say the building was "completely destroyed" by fire. The word "destroyed" alone carries the meaning of "completely destroyed."

Keep calm at the scene of the fire. Station yourself near police or fire officials directing activities. Usually the facts will be channeled to these persons. Look for facts, names, identifications. The description of the scene will take care of itself. You will remember how things looked, but facts will slip your mind if they have not been written down. Have a telephone spotted. Call the newspaper if a photographer is needed.

Be extremely careful when describing actions of persons crazed by fear not to make them appear ridiculous or hateful. Be careful in your use of humorous material. The persons involved in the fire may not find your humor in keeping with their feelings.

### **EXAMPLES**

*Eight die in fire; fire commissioner quoted on cause*

Eight persons perished today in a North End apartment house fire and Fire Commissioner Rollin A. Long later said there was evidence that the blaze had been set by a firebug.

Long said, also, there was evidence of arson in two other fires which broke out within a ten-block radius as firemen battled the flames in the Tallahassee Street structure, where the deaths occurred.

The police listed the dead as "Mr. and Mrs. Archie Ardmour and their children, Luty Mae, 5; Letty, 3, and Oscar, 2; Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Oboe, and Patrolman Simon Obonosky, 41."

Charlene Majesty, 21, was injured critically. Physicians said Obonosky, who was in the area when the fire started, died from severe burns and a possible leg fracture.

The bodies of three members of the Ardmour family were huddled near a window in their upper floor apartment. The others were sprawled in other parts of their home.

## **70. Air Accidents**

As flying becomes more common and commercial air lines more numerous passengers and prospective passengers are becoming more and more interested in causes of air accidents. The

cause is one of the first things a reader wants to know concerning an air crash. Get all the information available on that point. But do not state it in your news story without giving the authority. And do not place blame for the accident unless there are charges to back you up or records of an official investigating agency to prove your statement.

The following check list is designed to help you get the facts for your air-crash story:

a. Get all possible information on the cause of the crash—use authority.

b. Describe any unusual or freak angle of the accident.

c. Tell how near the plane was to safety. Readers like to speculate on the “if” factor.

d. Get facts about possibilities of official investigations.

e. Look for persons who saw the crash or saw the plane in distress before the accident.

f. Names and all identification possible on persons killed and/or injured.

g. Give full identification of the air line, if the plane is a commercial carrier. Get statements of company officials.

h. If you cannot go to the crash scene, interview persons who were there and describe what they saw.

i. Describe the plane. Tell who made it, the number of engines, its condition, safety equipment, and how long in service.

j. Get facts on rescue activities, salvage operations, removal of bodies and injured, and disposition of bodies.

k. Where was the plane going? Where did it come from? Where was its last stop prior to the accident?

l. Check for prominent persons in the passenger list.

m. Describe acts of heroism, brave deeds of crew members or passengers.

n. Search for stories of narrow escapes.

o. Full details concerning time and place of the crash.

p. Get facts concerning injury to persons, or danger to persons and property where plane crashed.

q. Check on number of women and children aboard plane.

r. Compare the accident with other air crashes within same area, from same cause, of same kind of aircraft, or within short period of time.

s. In all stories of air accidents be sure that controversial statements are not only attributed but that they are attributed to a competent authority.

### EXAMPLE

#### *Air accident with a freak escape angle; cause played up*

Dense fog is believed to have caused the crash of a Super-Speed air liner which killed 21 persons near Blankville but spared the life of a 2-year-old boy.

After a preliminary investigation of the crash, T. R. Mitchell, Civil Aeronautics board investigator from Big Village, Calif., said informally that fog was to blame for the crash before dawn yesterday.

Four C.A.A. officials continued the probe today.

At Greencroft Hospital here, Algernon Attleberry, 2, one of a family of four aboard the craft on its New York to San Francisco trip and the only survivor, called for his "mommy" as he slept fitfully. The child, apparently unharmed, was found crying in a clump of brush by one of the first persons to reach the wreck scene.

His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Roger B. Attleberry, Brooklyn, N. Y., and their other child, 2-month-old Martha, were killed in the two-engined converted C-47 on their anniversary.

All but three of the passengers were hurled from the plane and scattered over a 100-yard area where the craft slid to rest on a hillside before bursting into flame.

Observers on the scene said it was possible the pilot saw the beacon on the hill, and mistaking it for the field two miles away, came in for a landing.

Mortician Burnham Woods was in the first party to arrive at the wreck scene.

"As we approached the flaming plane we found a woman in the brush, unconscious but alive," Woods related. "She died shortly afterward.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

"Then I told the men to be quiet. I heard a baby crying. He was bawling something awful. I went over and picked him up. He had been thrown clear of the plane and was sitting there on the hillside. His crying was loud enough to be heard over the crackle of the flames."

The child, who today played with toys sent to the hospital by a local toy shop, was en route with his family to visit Attleberry's parents in Oakland, Calif., where the child's grandmother is seriously ill.

### *Crash of small plane; cause played up in the lead*

A young Army flight officer, dipping his wings in salute to his wife in her Blankville home, was killed yesterday when he flew too low and the plane plunged into a prairie.

The victim was Flight Officer Gordon B. Goode, 26, 1313 West Prospect Avenue.

According to Police Chief George Whitemouse, Goode was flying his own plane, a trainer purchased from the Navy.

He had been stationed at Fort Sioux and received orders to Blankville Field.

While his wife, Doris, watched from the home of her sister, Mrs. Nathaniel Nuffsphinxl, with whom she was visiting, Goode took off from a nearby field, Whitemouse said.

He was flying low to dip his wings to his wife. A fog and light drizzle prevented him from seeing utility wires and trees.

Suddenly the wings on one side were clipped off by trees, and those on the other side by the wires. The fuselage plunged into the prairie. Goode was killed instantly.

There were four houses near the crash scene, but none was damaged.

## **71. Automobile Accidents**

The accident-story writer must not use words loosely. An automobile accident in which ten persons are killed should not be described as a "disaster." Injuries should not be described as "lacerations and abrasions about the person." Use specific terms such as "cuts and bruises" and tell where the injury is. But omit the gory details. There is one type of reporter who believes that

realistic reporting of accidents throws such a fright into motorists that they drive more carefully. There is a possibility, however, that such reporting creates so much fear in the mind of the driver that he is less dependable in an emergency. Also, a word picture of brains, blood, and vital organs strewn along a highway is not pleasant for a wife or mother or father to face. If such reporting contributed a great public service, then the hurt to individuals would have to be passed over, but the public service benefit is doubtful.

When writing about injuries to the skull, do not say that the person received a "fractured skull." It should be "a fracture of the skull" or "skull fracture."

In an automobile accident be careful to place no blame on your own responsibility. It is a rare case when the reporter sees the accident with his own eyes. He must get his facts from others. Get authority for all statements concerning who was responsible for the accident. Get both sides of the story. Give all persons involved in the accident a chance to explain what happened. If two moving vehicles come together, it is better to write that they "collided" until there is definite proof that one struck the other. To say that one struck the other implies that the one doing the striking was at fault.

Be extremely careful in the use of the term "the speeding car" when describing a vehicle's movements before, during, or after an accident. You weren't there, probably. You don't know how the car was being driven. The same caution should be applied to use of other words that describe the manner of driving, such as "recklessly," "unlawfully," and "heedlessly."

Here is a check list for your accident story:

- a. Get names, addresses, and other identification of persons involved in the accident.
- b. Look for the cause of the accident—driver error, mechanical failure, highway condition, or blinding lights.
- c. Use term "fatally injured" when the person or persons die

after the accident rather than at the time of the accident. Be careful not to write "fatally killed."

d. Who were the first arrivals at the scene? Who took the injured to hospitals?

e. Has there been an investigation? Get statements of investigating officials.

f. Tell the make and model of the car. Do not say the vehicle was a "light model, low-priced sedan."

g. Check on freak angles and miraculous escapes.

h. Do not use such terms as "seriously injured" or "critically injured" unless these terms are used by doctors, then put them in quotes. Just say that the person or persons were injured, and then explain as simply as possible the nature of the injuries. Give specific authority for all descriptions of injuries.

i. Check on charges and arrests.

j. Place and time of the accident.

k. Description of how the accident occurred. Get statements of witnesses.

l. When will the inquest be held?

m. If the accident involved a bus or other commercial vehicle, identify the operating firm.

n. Were there children killed or injured?

## TERMINOLOGY

If possible, avoid the use of such terms as: *Incurred injuries*: A person incurs a debt, not an injury. *Sustained injuries*: The word sustain means to bear up against or to hold to a certain pitch or level. If your sentence requires this kind of construction, use "suffered injuries" or "received injuries." Better yet, say "He was burned about the face and left arm," instead of, "He suffered burns about the face and left arm."

It is correct to say that the accident happened or occurred at a certain time and place. It is not correct to say that the accident



took place. Events "take place" by design. A wedding "takes place" because it has been planned in advance.

### **EXAMPLES**

#### *Hit-and-run accident; soldier killed; story well qualified*

Ciomas A. Strnfty, a Blankville Field soldier, was fatally injured on Route 45 near Blankville Thursday morning, believed to be the victim of a hit-and-run driver.

Strnfty was picked up by a passing motorist at 4 A.M. and brought to a Blankville hospital, where he died at 6:15 A.M. Webster O. Horace, Blank County coroner, said the soldier had apparently been hit by several other cars before he was noticed by the unidentified motorist.

Blankville Field authorities, who held up details of the accident, pending notification of next of kin, arrived in Blankville early Thursday afternoon for an investigation. Horace scheduled an inquest into the death for 7 P.M. tonight at the Clark funeral home, where the body was taken.

Information found on the body indicated that Strnfty was a resident of Texas and had enlisted in service at El Paso, Texas. He received a discharge at Blankville Field last November and had re-enlisted.

#### *Detailed story of automobile accident—for local newspaper*

Two 17-year-old high-school girls were injured fatally and four other young persons were hurt seriously when their 1946 sedan crashed into the rear of a parked trailer truck on Route 10 one mile north of Blankville early last night.

The dead are:

Martha Anne Anopholes, 17, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert O. Anopholes, 954 South Fine Street.

Geraldine Sue Steptomaine, 17, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Christofer M. Steptomaine, Springdale, former Blankville residents.

Injured in the crash and patients this morning at Bidewell Hospital were:

Oscar Blunderbitz, 21, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Blunderbitz, 901 South Greenrest Lane, who remained unconscious this morning with injuries believed to be mostly internal.

Roger Deepuddle, 19, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Deepuddle, 200

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

North Fir Street, in "very serious" condition, according to hospital authorities. He has deep facial cuts and possible head injuries.

Mary Soupspoon, 17, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Soupspoon, 1919 West Vine Street, who received a possible head injury but spent a good night at the hospital.

Faddius Postens, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel R. Postens, Country Club Manor, who received bad body bruises but was least seriously injured of the four and spent a good night.

The driver of the trailer truck, Mulroy Pogsdale, 46, Coon River Bluff, is being held in the Blank County jail today on a charge of leaving his trailer parked on the highway without proper lighting. State's Attorney Wilbur Whiteside said no date had been set for a preliminary hearing on the charge.

The crash occurred about 8 P.M. as the Buick sedan, owned and driven by Postens, came over a slight incline in Route 10 as the youths were returning to Blankville from Springdale. The car collided with the left rear corner of the trailer part of the truck, which was parked on the highway. The auto rolled over several times and was demolished.

Miss Anopholes died of a crushed chest en route to Bidewell Hospital in the Bidewell ambulance, while Miss Steptomaine was dead of a broken neck upon arrival at Blankville Memorial Hospital in the Clark ambulance. The four injured persons were taken to Bidewell Hospital in a Harper ambulance.

According to the state police report, Pogsdale left the trailer parked on the highway about 1 P.M. when he had trouble with the tractor. Police said he came into Blankville with the tractor after putting out two flares and several flags. The flares apparently were extinguished by the wind, authorities reported.

The state police received a complaint call about 7:30 P.M., went to the scene to put out more flares, directed traffic for a short time, and then came to Blankville to look for Pogsdale. They found the driver at a garage and both he and the police were en route to the parked trailer when the police received a radio call about the crash.

Doctor Webster O. Horace, Blank County coroner, said an inquest into the two deaths would not be held for several days pending the recovery of the four injured persons.

## **72. Natural Disasters**

Natural disasters consist of tornadoes, hurricanes, windstorms, earthquakes, tidal waves, floods, landslides, blizzards, hail, and lightning. Reporters covering such occurrences must remain calm and look for facts. The following cautions are advised:

a. Check carefully counts of dead and injured. Get the best authority available for estimates and check one authority against another.

b. Be conservative in estimates of damage. The reporter has a responsibility to friends and relatives living outside the stricken area not to alarm them needlessly. Exaggerated accounts of a hurricane, for example, will cause the telephone and telegraph wires to be loaded with frantic messages to persons living in the damaged area.

c. Don't describe a city as having been swept into the sea when in reality only beach residences were washed away. Don't say that the city was flattened as though a giant hand had smashed it when in reality flimsy buildings in a small area were blown down.

d. Be careful about saying that the storm was the most "devastating in the city's history." If the city had experienced few storms, a minor one could still be the city's worst.

e. Don't use the term "cyclone" when you mean tornado or hurricane. The word "cyclone" is the general word for all kinds of windstorms. The damage is done specifically by a tornado, hurricane, or typhoon. A tornado is the most violent member of the cyclone family. It is a small funnel-shaped whirling storm which races along overland at speeds up to 250 miles an hour. Its path very often covers only a few hundred yards. The hurricane is a tropical cyclone with winds in excess of 75 miles an hour. Hurricane winds may be spread over a circular area several hundred miles in diameter. A hurricane in China is called a typhoon.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

f. Don't say widespread looting is going on if police pick up a few individuals with stolen property, and don't say the area is under martial law if servicemen are helping with rescue and salvage work.

g. Establish yourself near persons in authority. They are the persons who will give orders and to whom reports will be made.

### **BEAUFORT WIND SCALE**

The Beaufort wind scale is a good guide to follow when describing wind strength:

CALM is a wind up to five tenths of a mile an hour, and smoke rises vertically.

A STRONG BREEZE is 25 to 31 m.p.h., and it whistles in telephone wires.

A MODERATE GALE is 32 to 38 m.p.h. and sways whole trees.

A FRESH GALE is 39 to 46 m.p.h. and impedes walking.

A STRONG GALE is 47 to 54 m.p.h. and breaks signs.

A WHOLE GALE is 55 to 63 m.p.h. and uproots trees.

A STORM is 64 to 75 m.p.h. and does widespread damage.

A HURRICANE is 75 m.p.h. and up and does excessive damage.

### **CHECK-OFF LIST**

*Tornados, hurricanes, windstorms*

- a. Casualties—dead and injured.
- b. Property damage—residential and business property; particular areas of the city; old landmarks destroyed or damaged.
- c. Number of persons homeless.
- d. Path of the storm—where it came from and where it is going.
- e. Velocity of the wind, amount of rain, description of storm.
- f. Action of citizens during storm—preparations made for safety during storm.
- g. Rescue and salvage operations—how organized, who takes part.
- h. Eyewitness accounts—stories of rescues, escapes.
- i. Relief activities—how set up, who takes part.
- j. Special announcements or proclamations of officials.
- k. Statements from weather observers.

## *"And Sudden Death"*

- l. Comparison of storm with previous blows in same area.
- m. Damage to communications facilities, power, transportation.
- n. Evacuation activities before storm struck.
- o. Duration of the storm—when and where the "eye" passed over.

### *Earthquakes* (in addition to above information)

- a. Number of tremors, their intensity, duration.
- b. Fires and explosions accompanying or coming after tremors.

### *Tidal Waves* (in addition to above information)

- a. Cause of tidal wave—hurricane, earthquake.
- b. Number and height of waves, speed of movement.
- c. How far wave, or waves, swept inland.

### *Floods* (in addition to above information)

- a. Rise of the water, when crest is predicted.
- b. Efforts of workers to hold back the flood waters—work on levees, dams, etc.
- c. Crop and livestock loss.
- d. Cause of flood.
- e. Depth of water in towns and farm communities.

## **73. Drownings**

Stories of drownings have reader interest for the same reason that all news accounts of tragic accidents have reader interest. In addition, this type of story should serve to remind readers that carelessness, ignorance of safety rules and rescue procedure, and lack of coolness in an emergency often cause unnecessary loss of life. In addition to reporting the tragic news the reporter has the responsibility of warning his readers concerning dangerous conditions in rivers, lakes, pools, and seaside bathing areas. He does this by reporting all the facts, telling how other persons lost their lives. Therefore, the most important element of a drowning story, besides the name of the person who died, is the

cause of the death, the circumstances surrounding the tragedy. Check the following points in your drowning story: (a) name, address, and other identification of the person drowned; (b) circumstances of the drowning; (c) time and place; (d) rescue attempts; (e) artificial respiration efforts; (f) police action, if any; (g) announcement concerning inquest; (h) number of persons in the vicinity at the time of the drowning; (i) statements of witnesses; (j) biographical information concerning the deceased and his family; (k) funeral arrangements.

#### EXAMPLE

*Gravel pit drowning; circumstances most important part of the story*

Mrs. Marylee Boomster, 45, 1111 North Oak Street, drowned about 8 P.M. Saturday as she was swimming with a party of three others in an abandoned gravel pit near the Okaokee River southeast of Springdale.

According to reports given police by several of 20 witnesses, Mrs. Boomster disappeared in about five feet of water and was not missed for several minutes. She was pulled to shore after she had been under water for about five minutes, but efforts of bystanders and a Blankville fire department inhalator squad failed to revive her.

Mrs. Boomster, a resident of Blankville most of her life, was with a party which included Mr. and Mrs. Walter Shumwisky and Harris Cooley, all of Blankville.

The body was brought to the Clark funeral home here, but funeral arrangements were incomplete Saturday night. Doctor Webster O. Horace, county coroner, said an inquest jury would be empaneled today and an inquest would be conducted tomorrow.

Sidney T. Pipestem, Springdale, who was at the gravel pit swimming pool with his wife and friends, said he and four other men formed a "human chain" to search for Mrs. Boomster when she was reported missing by her party. After they found her she was given artificial respiration with the aid of an oxygen mask brought to the scene by a Springdale man. A three-man inhalator squad from Blankville arrived a few minutes later, but too late to prevent Mrs. Boomster's death.

Doctor Horace said there was a possibility that the woman may have suffered a heart attack before she disappeared under water, but he said no autopsy would be performed unless the family requested it.

## **74. Industrial Accidents**

Industrial accidents must be reported with caution. Quite often such accidents end up in court actions to collect damages for the injured parties and the newspaper reporter should not try the case in his accident story. All parties concerned should be given an opportunity to present their side of the mishap. Reader interest will center around the following:

- a. Complete identification of the injured party.
- b. Full explanation of the kind of work being done at the time of the accident.
- c. Complete identification of the firm, including names of owners, by whom the injured person was employed. Do not use such anonymous identifications as "local building contractor," "Blankville construction concern." or "local soybean plant."
- d. Cause of the accident with specific authority given for all statements made. The reporter should make no insinuations of his own concerning negligence on the part of anyone. Report the facts.
- e. Safety record of the industry. Only data that are a matter of public record should be used.
- f. Statements of witnesses and injured parties.
- g. Statements of officials of the company.
- h. When and by whom investigations will be made.

### **EXAMPLE**

#### *Industrial accident; man crushed by steel girders*

Morton A. Brittledish, 35-year-old welder employed at the C. L. Fishbait Co., Blankville, died at 11:10 A.M. today of injuries received when he was crushed between two steel girders at the plant.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Brittledish was being rushed to Memorial Hospital in a Tootsie ambulance when he died. The accident occurred at approximately 11 A.M.

L. J. Bottlethwait, president of the Fishbait Company, said that Brittledish was working on construction of the new addition to the plant. Girders were being welded on edge when one being lifted by a crane struck another already in place. The blow set in motion a line of the steel beams, and Brittledish was crushed in the chest by one of the heavy pieces about eight girders down the line from the one that was hit.

Bottlethwait said that the accident today was the first fatality at the Blankville plant, which was opened in 1930. The firm manufactures construction machinery.

Fortescue Wheelhouse, the crane operator, said he had moved four or five of the beams before the fatal accident. When he picked up another, it was not properly balanced, he related, and as he swung it slightly to the west, one end of the beam hit the others and toppled them over.

Brittledish was born Aug. 10, 1911, and had been working for the Fishbait Company since Nov. 10, 1939.

He leaves his wife Emma Belle; a son, Gordon, in the Navy at San Diego; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Custer O. Brittledish, Springdale, and one sister, Mrs. Claude P. Pinkjohn, 109 South Nathan Street, Blankville.

## **75. Railroad Accidents**

Train wrecks produce dramatic copy. Like other kinds of major accidents, however, they call for organized coverage. Seldom is it possible for one reporter to cover all angles of a train wreck. One or more reporters might gather facts at the scene of the crash, another might interview passengers, a third might cover hospitals, and a fourth interview company officials.

### **FIRST DAY DEVELOPMENTS**

a. Number of persons killed and injured. Check hospitals, morgues, and first-aid stations for accurate count.



## *"And Sudden Death"*

- b. Time and place of the accident.
- c. Type of train, where it came from and where it was going, name of the train.
- d. Description of the wrecked train—number of cars derailed, condition of the tracks, kinds of coaches.
- e. Apparent cause of the wreck—train derailed, collision with another train, explosion, fire.
- f. Rescue operations.
- g. Disposition of dead and injured.
- h. Statements of witnesses and passengers.
- i. Estimates of speed of train or trains.
- j. Other trains sent to continue trip for uninjured passengers.
- k. Estimates concerning how long service on the line will be tied up and how other trains will be routed around the wreck area.
- l. Conduct of passengers during the emergency.
- m. Police control of crowds at the scene.

### **SECOND DAY DEVELOPMENTS**

- a. Official count of dead and injured.
- b. Exact cause of wreck—faulty switch, failure of engineer to obey signals, mechanical failure of the engine or one of the cars.
- c. Investigations under way.
- d. Number of persons still hospitalized. Condition of the more seriously injured.
- e. Status of salvage operations and repairs to tracks.

### **THIRD DAY DEVELOPMENTS**

- a. Reports from investigating groups.
- b. Estimate of damage.
- c. Status of salvage operations.
- d. Number of persons still hospitalized.

**EXAMPLE**

*Wreck of streamliner; details for the first day story*

Two crew members were killed and about 25 passengers were injured Saturday morning when the southbound City of Kokomo, Q and Q streamliner to Florida, jackknifed and derailed three miles north of Blankville.

A combination baggage car and coach turned over, pinning the dead in the wreckage. The huge three-unit Diesel locomotive plowed up tracks for a quarter of a mile and finally came to rest at a right angle across the track. All of the other eight coaches left the track but remained upright.

The conductor, Cornelius Z. Otteman, 390 South Brazile Drive, was dead upon arrival at Memorial Hospital.

The baggageman, Carlos A. Anthony, Springdale, was pinned in the wreckage, and rescuers worked more than two hours to free his body from the mangled baggage-car coach that was jammed against the locomotive.

The engineer was Z. Z. Sworgas, 59, Spoonriver, and Lord M. Listener, 45, Deep Gap, was the fireman. Both were taken to Central Hospital.

Twenty-four persons were brought to Blankville hospitals for treatment, but O. D. Mangle, a passenger agent aboard the train, said he believed only about eight passengers were seriously injured.

The fireman and engineer were "dazed" when they were helped from the locomotive by Earle Dogoode of Springdale, a farmer who was working in a nearby field. Dogoode also removed the conductor, whose leg was all but severed by a rail which came up through the floor of the coach.

No explanation of the wreck was offered immediately by railroad officials, but Dogoode said that the dazed engineer muttered "something about a switch."

Dogoode said the train had just passed a switch, one mile from Springdale, when the "locomotive jackknifed, with the front end going in one direction and the rear end in another." The other cars derailed and piled up behind it.

"Rails were thrown high into the air, and there was fire flying," he said.

The farmer estimated the train was traveling 60 miles an hour, but

the flagman, T. O. Mud, 1313 East Jerry Street, said, "We were doing better than that." Mud, however, declined to estimate the speed.

The fireman said the train passed Arthurtown at 9:47 A.M. and was running "a little late" for its 10 A.M. scheduled arrival in Blankville. Passengers said Blankville had just been announced on the public address system when the crash occurred.

Mud, who was in the second car from the rear, said "pretty near all the passengers were thrown or jerked out of their seats," but both he and the passenger agent agreed there was little panic among the passengers. Passengers said people and baggage "went flying through the air."

Mangle said, "There was some screaming when folks thought they were trapped, but they quieted down when they found they could get out."

After they viewed the wreckage, most passengers returned to the cars and sat quietly until a five-coach train arrived from Blankville to pick them up.

Injured were removed quickly in ambulances summoned from Blankville and Blankville Field.

Both of the railroad's main line tracks were torn up, and there was no immediate estimate how quickly the wrecked train could be removed and the tracks repaired.

Chief Dispatcher R. E. Bigmusky said a local train due here from Chickanooky at 11 A.M. was halted at Springdale, and passengers were brought to Blankville on busses. Train No. 1, due here about noon, was detoured by way of Farmtown and then to Blankville over the Big Nine railroad.

## **76. Marine Accidents**

Most of the marine accidents reported today involve small craft or freighters. Major accidents at sea like the sinking of the "Titanic" are rare. The reporter should get the following facts:

- a. Name and description of the ships or small craft involved in the accident.
- b. Nature and cause of the accident.
- c. Rescue and salvage operations.

- d. Casualties.
- e. Value of the ships and cargo.
- f. Number of passengers and crew aboard.
- g. Destination of the craft; port of departure.
- h. Place and time of the accident—how far at sea.
- i. Statements of passengers, rescuers, ship's officers.
- j. Owners of ships or small craft involved in the accident.
- k. Insurance on vessel and cargo.
- l. Heroic acts by passengers, crew, or rescuers.

## **77. Accidental Shootings**

An accurate, factual account of an accidental shooting often-times preaches the sermon that "unloaded" guns are dangerous. In such stories it is the responsibility of the reporter to include all facts that call attention to the penalties of carelessness and thoughtlessness in the handling of all kinds of firearms. Such facts are a matter of extreme public interest. In addition these stories should contain

- a. Complete identification of person or persons shot.
- b. Circumstances of the shooting.
- c. Disposition of the dead or wounded.
- d. Time and place of the shooting.
- e. Official investigation, if any.
- f. Type of gun fired; facts about the wound.
- g. Statement of witnesses, if any.

In stories of accidental shootings the reporter must be careful not to infer that the shooting might have been a suicide attempt. If there is no doubt that the shooting was accidental, give all the facts to show that it was an accident. If there is doubt, state the facts clearly and simply and let the reader come to his own conclusion.

### EXAMPLE

#### *Accidental shooting dramatized by the reporter*

"Honey, there's someone in here."

With that whispered warning from his wife, George O. Yuletide, 811 North Hickory Street, slipped quietly out of bed early yesterday morning, mindful that police had been hunting a night prowler in the neighborhood.

Yuletide, 24, pulled a revolver from a dresser drawer, turned and fired once across the dark room at a form dimly outlined at the bedroom window. Then he snapped on the light.

On the floor near the window lay his 21-year-old wife, Irma, who also had left her bed.

Mrs. Yuletide, mother of a 9-month-old daughter and expecting another baby, died of a chest wound two hours later in Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Armand L. Votilly, Blank County medical examiner, issued a certificate of accidental death.

### 78. Explosions—Mine Accidents

Explosions and mine accidents might well be classed as industrial accidents but they are treated separately here to distinguish them from the minor, frequent mishaps that occur in industry. Explosions and mine accidents often attain the stature of major disasters. The reporter should not use the word "disaster" to describe such events, however, unless the accident results in death to many persons. When covering such accidents the reporter should check for

a. Cause of the explosion or mine accident. Explosions might be caused by gas, bombs, compressed air, dynamite or TNT, live ammunition, gasoline, or chemicals.

b. Explanation of the nature of the accident. In the case of mine accidents tell whether there was an explosion, cave-in, fire, flood, or death from gas.

c. Casualties.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

- d. Disposition of the dead and injured.
  - e. Statements of witnesses, if any.
  - f. Statements of mine officials and government authorities concerning safety regulations in force at the mine.
  - g. Statements of miners or their representatives concerning safety conditions in the mine.
  - h. Rescue operations—how many persons took part, what private and governmental agencies assisted, how long rescue operations continued.
  - i. Investigations—when and where investigations will be held.
  - j. Time and place of the mine accident or explosion.
  - k. Number of persons in the mine at the time of the accident.
- When the last shifts changed.
- l. Relief activities undertaken for families of the dead.

If the reporter quotes charges made by one person or a group of persons indicating negligence on the part of someone as a cause of the accident, opportunity should be given the person so charged to present his side of the case. Mine controversies become extremely bitter at times. The reporter must remain outside of such entanglements if he is to report the details of the accident fairly and truthfully.

### **EXAMPLE**

*Main story of a mine explosion; known dead and trapped featured in lead*

Nineteen miners were known dead and 125 trapped in the gas- and dust-filled chambers of Blankville Coal Company's No. 3 mine after a terrifying explosion yesterday at 3:30 P.M.

Oscar J. Eastwater, vice-president of the company, said that 28 men had been rescued, all but three immediately after the blast. Among the known dead were Milton O. Angerbit, a pumper, and Howie T. Areyu, a crew foreman.

The Hickory County mine, just south of Blankville, was a scene of intensive rescue work today, with eight teams in operation with gas masks and oxygen tanks. Ford Middlefork, state mine inspector, was

in immediate charge of the rescue crews which came from Springdale, Bull Creek, Mountain Junction, and Cross City.

Four of the crews descended into the smoking shaft at 6:45 this morning, 25 members in all. Middlefork said the men were scheduled to remain in the mine from six to eight hours, and had not come up at press time.

Conflicting reports as to the fate of the trapped miners were heard. Laurence Westpuckle, chief electrician at the mine, expressed little hope of finding them alive, but Philip M. Gilsagle, director of the state department of mines and minerals, would not give up hope.

"The rescue crews are re-establishing ventilation in the corridors," Gilsagle said, "and were about 3,000 feet from the main shaft entrance at my last report."

Gilsagle said that when the rescue crews had advanced another 1,000 feet, more could be learned as to the extent of the damage. Fire, which would almost certainly seal the doom of the trapped miners, was principally feared by the director.

Sidney Proonhook, general superintendent of the company, said that the miners had been working in crews of about 20 in side entries as far as three and a half miles from the main shaft. He added that progress of the rescue workers was slow because they had to stop and check all side entrances for possible survivors.

Elmer Oglesby, face boss, said that it would take at least until 6 P.M. today to find and remove all of the miners, because rescue workers were able to move only 60 feet every 30 minutes.

If none of the missing men is found alive, the Blankville blast will be the nation's worst mine disaster since 1928, when 195 were killed on May 19 at Mather, Pa. It would be the worst in the state since 1909 when 230 died in the Skunkwater mine explosion.

Red Cross and Salvation Army workers have set up coffee and doughnut canteens at the mine. The crowd, which had dispersed after midnight last night, gathered again in the morning and waited tensely and nervously for the outcome.

Anxious, grieving families, still holding to a thread of hope as the chill night hours passed with only 28 of their men brought out alive, pressed against ropes at the pit head and watched the mercy crews come and go.

Through the early morning hours two spotlights cast eerie shadows at the entrance way of the mine, and young and old stood tense, tight-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

lipped, the men with their hands in their pockets, talking quietly or just staring. Feeble yellow street lights danced in the wind.

In addition to the main accident story, special phases of the disaster should be covered in separate stories. These stories might consist of

- a. Authentic list of miners still in the mine, the dead, and the rescued.
- b. Interviews with rescued miners.
- c. Account of relief activities under way, donations, and who made them.
- d. Roundup of similar disasters in history of the state and nation.
- e. Interviews with miners who had been waiting to go on duty when the blast occurred.
- f. Members of rescue teams.
- g. Special local buildings used for hospitals, first-aid stations, or morgues.

In all kinds of accident stories the reporter must be careful that summary figures used in the lead check with lists of names published. For example, if the lead says that 19 were known dead and 125 trapped, 144 names must be accounted for.

### **79. Electrocutions—Asphyxiations.**

Reader interest in electrocutions and asphyxiations is tied up directly with the names of persons killed or injured and the details of the accident. The reader wishes to know "how it happened" so that he can avoid the same mistakes. He likes to know about the "if factor." If the victim had not taken one more step he would have missed the live wire, or if the milkman had stopped to investigate the odor of gas the lives of the sleeping occupants of a house might have been saved.

The reporter should look for the following information:

- a. Names and other identification of persons killed or injured.



- b. Full information about how the electrocution or asphyxiation occurred. Describe dangerous home conditions that led to the tragedy.
- c. Efforts to revive the electrocuted or asphyxiated persons. Efforts to remove bodies from contact with live wires.
- d. Official action—when and where inquest will be held.
- e. Time and place of the accident.
- f. Disposition of the dead or injured.

### EXAMPLE

#### *Three killed by carbon monoxide fumes; cause played up*

Carbon monoxide fumes from an unvented hot water heater killed a family of three Tuesday night. The bodies were found in their 4-room bungalow at 1090 Cooler Lane. They were last seen alive Aug. 10.

The reflection of the flame from the basement hot water heater attracted the attention of Tobias Looselouse, 1092 Cooler Lane, and led to the finding of the bodies of Gilbert A. Dawn, 49, a fireman for the Blankville and Jackrabbit Railroad; his wife, Idora Jones Dawn, 35, and Mrs. Dawn's son by a previous marriage, January Dawn, 12.

Looselouse telephoned the sheriff's office at 5:45 P.M. and Deputy Sheriff Nick O. Carter went to the Dawn home. Entering the bungalow by an unlocked door, Carter found the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Dawn in their bed in the east bedroom. The body of January was in bed in the west bedroom. They had been dead a week, Coroner William T. Nuts said. He gave carbon monoxide poisoning as the cause.

Gordon Schmilk, 14-year-old friend of January, said he last saw the boy on the evening of Aug. 10. When he failed to appear during the week, Gordon presumed that January had gone to Springdale to visit his grandfather, Milton A. Swan, a farmer.

A newspaper in the home bore an Aug. 10 date. A letter in the mail drop from the railroad company inquired about Dawn's absence from work.

The water heater was red hot from continuous burning. It is a non-automatic, requiring manual operation to turn on and off. There is no stack from the vent opening to carry fumes outside.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

While the bodies were being removed, Dawn's brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Y. Dawn, who live on Friendly Road, Washington County, drove up for a visit. Earl Dawn said he last saw his brother Aug. 8 at a meeting of Blankville American Legion Post 999, of which both were members. There was no telephone in the Gilbert Dawn home, and Earl said he had not attempted to communicate with his brother since their last meeting.

An inquest has been tentatively set for this afternoon.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Is There a Doctor in the House?*

80. Suicide and Attempted Suicide	178
81. News from the Morgue	182
82. News from the Hospital	188
83. Epidemics	191
84. Medical Discoveries and Cures	194
85. Public Health—Sanitary Inspection	196
86. Medical Freaks	199
87. News from Medical Societies	200

Stories of illness, death, public health, medical discoveries, and medical freaks often involve facts and situations that contain hidden, explosive qualities. Once in a while the reporter handling such stories finds that he needs to retreat hastily to his neutral corner and prepare to come out fighting—with his fists full of facts. Or, he finds that the public interest calls for compassion and a quiet voice in the news story. The problems are many; their solutions oftentimes are not simple.

## **80. Suicide and Attempted Suicide**

Editors throughout the nation generally are kind in their treatment of suicide and attempted suicide news. Reporters are instructed to be as easy on the family as possible. Where the circumstances warrant there are a number of ways the reporter can be “easy” on the family.

- a. He can use the story without names or other identification;  
or
- b. He can use the story with names and identification but not use the terms “suicide” or “attempted suicide”; or
- c. He can ignore the attempted suicide story altogether.

These policies, and others, are indicated in the following statements of managing editors of several well-known newspapers:

We use the names of persons in suicide and attempted suicide stories, but the suicide news is invariably played way down and handled on a strict obituary basis, unless there is a definite newsworthy element. If the suicide jumps off the highest building in town on

## *Is There a Doctor in the House?*

Main Street at high noon, we are, of course, compelled to play it that way. The average gas-pipe case goes in with the obits.

—Worcester (Mass.) *Telegram*

We use names in suicide and attempted suicide cases, but ban identifying the poisons. We do not use the word "suicide" except in quotes from official sources.

—Pensacola (Fla.) *News*

Names and details of suicide stories are restricted only to those suicides containing an element of news. As an example, if a woman suffering from an incurable disease dies from self-administered poison, we cannot see where there is much news involved. On the other hand, if a woman jumps from a skyscraper in the downtown section to end her life, we figure the public display and the spectacular manner in which the victim chose to end her life merits a news story.

—Mobile (Ala.) *Press Register*

We do use names in suicide and attempted suicide stories, but we quote the coroner or a responsible police official on the verdict. If no official verdict is rendered, we report only the established facts.

—Minneapolis (Minn.) *Tribune*

We use names in suicides and identify them as suicides when possible. An attempted suicide, particularly an attention attracting attempt, is recognized as such and the name is used. In regard to this, an apparent "routine" attempt by the use of gas is ordinarily reported as "overcome by gas."

—Waterloo (Iowa) *Daily Courier*

There is little of news value in suicides or attempted suicides unless they are spectacular leaps from downtown buildings. Suicides can be handled in good taste without using the word "suicide." Such as, "John Jones was found dead today at his home. One bullet had been discharged from a revolver beside the body."

—Indianapolis (Ind.) *Times*

We print suicide stories with names. We do not play them up. As a general rule, we print only one paragraph on a suicide with a black cap head. We do not print attempted suicides except in unusual cases, such as a recent case in which a celebrated criminal attempted suicide in his cell. We do not play up suicide stories or print attempted suicides because we have found that the printing or playing up of one such story causes a wave of similar suicides or suicidal attempts.

—Tampa (Fla.) *Morning Tribune*

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

The use of names in suicide and attempted suicide news is a matter we leave to the authorities. If they make that a matter of record, we feel obliged to publish it.

—Brooklyn (N.Y.) *Eagle*

In attempted suicides, we handle the stories gingerly. In other words, if a woman is in the hospital after swallowing poison, we say as much but make no reference, of course, to an attempt at suicide.

—Danville (Ill.) *Commercial News*

In summary, then, the editors recommend that the suicide and attempted suicide story be handled as follows: (a) As long as there is any doubt at all concerning the intention of the person to kill himself, avoid the words "suicide" or "attempted suicide"; (b) give the facts simply and let the reader draw his own conclusions; (c) when the victim ends his life in public in such a manner that there is no doubt about what happened, the use of the word "suicide" is not harmful; (d) do not describe in great detail the manner in which the person ended his life; particularly do not name poisons; (e) where formal findings of "suicide" by authorities are available, the term can be used or the exact wording of the authorities used; (f) do not use long quotes from suicide notes where the general effect offends good taste; (g) do not write your story so that suicide looks easy or heroic.

### EXAMPLES

*Suicide committed in public; victim identified; story told with few details but feature angle played up*

A man walked into a shooting gallery at 690 South Temper Street last night and paid Pete Reo, 21, the attendant, 25 cents to rent a .22 caliber target pistol.

He fired four shots at a bell target, all of which missed the mark, then turned to Reo: "Didn't you put live ammunition in this thing?"

Reo nodded. "Aim and keep shooting," he said, encouragingly.

The man turned the pistol against his chest and shot himself near the heart.

The man died on the way to Highland Hospital. He was identified through Veteran's Administration records in his pocket as Strmsky J.



## *Is There a Doctor in the House?*

Suputsky, 38, of Coon Hollow, Vt., who was honorably discharged from the Army Sept. 10, 1946, after serving seven months. Scrawled on a card was:

"If I'm still alive call a priest."

*Suicide committed "on the job"; victim identified; word "suicide" not used, but facts indicate manner of death*

The body of Rodney Pipestem, 6669 Palmetto Avenue, was found yesterday in a second-floor storeroom at the Webster Supply Company, Star and Moon Streets.

A 32-caliber pistol was found beside the body with one cartridge discharged.

It was thought the body had been in the storeroom since Pipestem went there to wash bottles last Friday. Pipestem was 65 years old.

*Suicide committed at home; victim identified; facts of death simply told*

Dolphin O. Greenstreet, 17 years old, a junior at East High School, was found shot to death early today in the basement of his home, 10 Fir Street.

There was a bullet wound in the boy's head and a .38-caliber revolver containing a single discharged shell was found beside the body.

The body was discovered by the boy's father, Walter A. Greenstreet, who had gone into the basement with a hamper of clothes shortly after 7:30 A.M.

The boy was clothed in pajamas. The revolver, of Spanish make, belonged to his father.

The parents told Coroner Wistert O. Wimpey they had gone to a motion-picture show last night, leaving their son home alone, and the house was dark when they returned about 11 P.M., so they had assumed he was asleep in his room.

The father is a partner in the insurance brokerage firm of Greenstreet, Wibby, and Jones. Efforts were made today to communicate with another son, Wilbur, 18, who left last Saturday on a hitchhiking trip to Dallas, Texas.

An inquest will be held tomorrow at 10 A.M.

## **81. News from the Morgue**

The reporter should write obituaries with dignity and at the same time show sympathy for the relatives of the dead person. He must realize that each death he writes about may be the greatest tragedy thus far in the lives of the loved ones who survive. But the death story is no place for gushing sentimentality. It calls for simple, straightforward writing that accurately portrays the importance of a person to his community, state, or nation. Neither is the death story a place for cynicism or "cold" reporting. By being a careful fact gatherer, a complete fact gatherer, the reporter can "warm" his story with those details of a person's life that fellow citizens will wish to remember. In this connection the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican* cautions its reporters:

Be careful about writing obituaries. Make every possible effort to get the facts and write them accurately. Omit reference to aspects of the dead person's life, unless the circumstances are exceptional, which would pain or grieve the surviving relatives and friends. Good will may be cultivated for the paper by writing appreciatively regarding the dead person's good qualities and achievements.

One thing that makes many death stories unsatisfactory to readers is the "police blotter," "who's who" style of listing of name, age, and address in the lead. Unless the age is particularly important leave it for later use in the story. Immediately after the name identify the dead person in such a way that the most readers will feel they knew him. If you write, "George Appleman, who has sold groceries at Elm and Church Streets for the last 30 years, died today," more readers will feel they know him than if you write, "George Appleman, 63, 782 North Insurance Avenue, died today." Even though they don't know George, they will have a clearer picture in their minds of the grocery at Elm and Church Streets than of the home address.

In death stories be careful in regard to the following:

a. A man "leaves" a wife, but his widow "survives" him. Do not say, "George Appleman leaves his widow, Martha Ann Appleman." And do not say, "Martha Ann Appleman is the widow of the LATE George Appleman." Do not refer to the estate, funeral, body, or will of the LATE George Appleman.

b. Use "body" instead of "corpse" or "remains." Do not say, "The body will be SHIPPED." Use "bury," not "inter," and "funeral" not "obsequies." Do not use "casket" for "coffin," "last resting place" for "grave," "passed on," or "passed away" for "died." One does not "meet" death.

c. Do not say that the body is "reposing" at the funeral home. Just say the body is at the funeral home. A body does not "lie in state" unless the dead person was prominent enough to make the funeral a state occasion.

d. Sometimes it is poor taste to give the cause of death. Do not write that "senility" was the cause of death.

e. It is correct to say that the funeral was held or took place at the home, chapel, or the church, except in the case of the Roman Catholic funeral service. The Roman Catholic service is considered to be a continuing service, usually starting at the home, continuing at a Mass, and concluding with a committal service at the cemetery. A Mass is "offered," "celebrated" or "sung." It is not "held."

f. In many newspapers today the word "bearers" is used instead of "pallbearers."

g. Do not mention the place of death when the death occurs in a state institution like an insane asylum or "poor house." Some newspapers get around this by saying that the person died in a state institution after an extended illness.

The following leads indicate how the reporter can "high-light" a person's life in a few words:

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 12—(AP)—General Joseph W. Stilwell, 63, commander of the Sixth Army affectionately known as "Vinegar

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Joe" by his former American and Chinese command in Burma, died today in his sleep of a liver ailment.

CHICAGO, Oct. 9—(AP)—A ward political dynasty founded before the first Chicago world fair in 1893 faded into history today with the death of Michael "Hinky Dink" Kenna.

NEW YORK, Nov. 19—(AP)—James J. (Jimmy) Walker, mayor of New York City during the glittering days of the prohibition era, the Wall Street boom and night club pallor, is dead at 65.

BLANKVILLE, Dec. 12—George W. Underbody, Blankville attorney for nearly a half century, died at 3:15 P.M. yesterday in his home, 1010 West Moon Street.

### **THE DEATH STORY**

The death story should contain the following information: (a) name and identification of the dead person; the identification should "high-light" the person's life in such a way as to make him known to the most readers; (b) time and place of death; (c) cause of death, if the cause can be told; (d) age at time of death; (e) explanation regarding the funeral services; explain that funeral plans are incomplete or tell briefly what the plans are; (f) account of the last illness; (g) date and place of birth; (h) high lights of his career; (i) comments of business associates, friends; (j) survivors.

### **THE FUNERAL STORY**

The funeral story should contain the following information: (a) time and place of the funeral; (b) minister or ministers who will officiate; (c) place of burial; (d) bearers; (e) organizations that will attend or conduct parts of the service; (f) out-of-town persons who will attend the funeral; (g) special music; (h) kind of service (public, private, no flowers, body to be cremated and ashes scattered at particular place designated by the person before his death); (i) official recognition (closing of public offices,

places of business, flags at half mast); (j) special tributes from organizations or private persons; (k) feature angles.

### EXAMPLES

*Death story; name, identification, time of death, place of death and cause of death, all in the lead*

Roger W. Dodger, nationally known farm leader, died at Memorial Hospital shortly after 11 P.M. Monday. A heart ailment was the immediate cause of his death.

Funeral arrangements were incomplete today awaiting the arrival of two daughters, Mrs. Ruth Finderbusch, Chicago, and Mrs. Martha Frothingame, San Diego, Calif.

Mr. Dodger, apparently in good health early Monday morning, had driven a tractor to the field on his farm near Coon Hollow, and planned to supervise work there when he became suddenly ill. He was taken back to the house, but it was believed his condition was not serious. In the afternoon, however, he entered the hospital for a routine checkup. The ailment recurred shortly after 11 P.M. and he failed to rally.

His death came as a distinct shock to friends and neighbors throughout Blank County.

"The death of Mr. Dodger is a tremendous loss to Blankville University and to the college of agriculture in particular," Wallace A. Sternsheets, head of the department of agronomy, declared Monday.

"He was one of the most outstanding agricultural leaders in the state and nation, a leader who stood for progressive education, and certainly one of the most prominent contributors to farming practices in the corn soil belt."

Doctor Sternsheets credits Mr. Dodger with being responsible for introduction of the soybean into the Midwest as a major farm crop, and with being one of the pioneers who took the initial steps in experiments when the crop was first introduced.

Although not a graduate of the agricultural college, Mr. Dodger had been enrolled as an undergraduate there.

"He left college to return to his home near Point Pleasant to manage and direct the farm owned by his mother," Doctor Sternsheets said. "He came back to Blank County in 1911 or 1912, this time as the manager and operator of the Philip Wilderwarm farm two miles southeast of Coon Hollow."

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Mr. Dodger continued to make his home on this farm up to his death, returning to the University for short courses and to continue the contacts established as a student.

For many years he has been a member of the advisory board of the college, and closely identified with the experiment station.

Because of his outstanding contributions and farm activities, Mr. Dodger was chosen a director of the Alexander Leesburg Foundation when that institution was set up for its program of agricultural experiments, and served as president of the board.

His work with soybeans, stemming from the small plots that were planted under the direction of the late Mr. Wilderwarm and himself, brought him into prominence with the American Soybean Association and he served as a charter member and director.

Closely identified with the farm bureau and one of the charter members, Mr. Dodger had been assigned a part in the annual state farm sport festival held at Blankville University. Unable to attend, he had thrown open his home to any visitors who might not have housing during their stay.

"In listing his home with the registration committee, he pointed out the location of his food locker, with the instructions that his guests make themselves at home during their stay," Boyce W. Vibrator, farm adviser and chairman of the festival registration committee, said in recalling the note that had come to his office.

"That, I believe, was characteristic of Roger Dodger. He was always doing whatever he possibly could to make the way a little easier, to add a bit more pleasantness for his fellow man."

Mr. Dodger's activities were not limited to agriculture. His interest included young people, and his church work and philanthropies have been legion throughout the county.

He had served as a member of the board at the University Y.M.C.A. and was one of the leaders who carried on the campaign to establish its program on the Blankville campus.

Mr. Dodger was born June 10, 1888, at Point Pleasant, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Dodger. His mother and two brothers, Thomas Dodger and Wilbur Dodger, now live at Tankton.

His immediate family survivors are Mrs. Dodger, Mrs. Finderbusch, Mrs. Frothingame, and a son, Paul, the latter the operator of a farm implement business in Coon Hollow.

*Funeral story; name, age, place and time of death, place and time of the funeral, and place of burial, all in the lead*

Funeral services for Roger W. Dodger, 62, prominent Coon Hollow farm leader who died Monday night at Memorial Hospital, will be held at 2:30 P.M. Friday at the First Methodist Church, Blankville. Burial will be in Oak Hill Cemetery, Coon Hollow.

Officiating at the services will be the Rev. H. Cawthorn Goodbody, pastor of the church, and the Rev. Joseph J. Jingle, Goose Creek, former Methodist pastor at Coon Hollow.

The body will remain at the Lukins funeral home, Coon Hollow, until Thursday afternoon, when it will be taken to the Dodger residence.

Mr. Dodger had been intimately connected with the Blankville church, serving on a number of important committees and taking part in the church's activities in addition to serving the church at Coon Hollow.

He was likewise a member of the board of trustees at Wesley Foundation, and had been an adviser to the Preacher's Aid Society of the state conference of the Methodist Church.

"His constant and real service in his church marked him as an outstanding leader," Doctor Goodbody declared Wednesday, "and we of the First Methodist church regarded him as one of our own."

Two daughters, Mrs. Ruth Finderbusch, Chicago, and Mrs. Martha Frothingame, San Diego, Calif., are en route to attend the services.

Mr. Dodger, who would have been 63 years old on his next birthday on Nov. 20, died suddenly Monday night of a heart attack.

*Funeral story in which funeral facts are tied up with strings of human interest*

NEW YORK, Nov. 19—(UP)—The people he loved stood in line for hours today for a last look at Jimmy Walker, the gay and lovable ex-mayor who went to meet "the man upstairs."

James J. Walker, 65, died in Doctor's Hospital from a cerebral blood clot at 6:25 P.M. yesterday, admired by millions because he never held a grudge.

"The man upstairs takes care of things like that," he once said.

The humble and the great waited patiently in front of the Frank E. Campbell funeral parlor, Madison Avenue at 59th, to pay their

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

respects beginning at noon to the politician of another era who looked at the world and found it amusing.

The public never forgot his good humor.

They forgot that he stepped out of office under fire. But Fiorello H. LaGuardia, his bitterest political foe, recommended Walker for the \$20,000 a year job as impartial chairman of the cloak and suit industry which he held for five years.

They remembered Jimmy Walker, who frequently squelched the gloom spreaders with a wisecrack.

It was the Jimmy Walker who laughed a book censorship bill out of the state assembly with: "I have yet to hear of a woman whose virtue was destroyed by a book."

It was Mayor Jimmy who welcomed Wiley Post and Harold Gatty after their round-the-world flight in the Winnie Mae with: "Winnie Mae, Winnie must, Winnie did."

It was Jimmy Walker who once before found a crowd waiting for a look at him and said:

"What's the matter? Did they close the aquarium?"

Solemn high requiem mass was planned tentatively for 10:30 A.M. Thursday at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Burial will be in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery at Pleasantville, N. Y.

## **82. News from the Hospital**

What kind of news should the hospital beat reveal? Here are a few suggestions:

*a. Administrative.* Changes in personnel; financial reports; endowments; new equipment and facilities; building program; nurse training, new nurses, nurse graduation programs; reports (monthly, annual) on patients served, charity services; needs and general conditions (lack of funds, overcrowded conditions).

*b. Patients.* Three possibilities: stories about patients entering the hospital; stories on their condition while they are in the hospital, and stories about patients who are discharged from the hospital.

*c. Medical discoveries and experiments.* Announcements by



doctors of successful treatments and special techniques; experiments which show promise.

d. Rare and difficult operations. News of this kind must be handled with care and in full cooperation with doctors and hospital authorities so that patients and relatives will not be embarrassed unnecessarily.

e. Unusual illnesses. News of this kind should be handled in cooperation with doctors to prevent panic or undue alarm.

f. Births. Stories of unmarried mothers must be handled on an individual basis. In most cases the story should not be used. Social workers believe that most cases of this kind can be worked out satisfactorily and support obtained for the child if there is no publicity. Where the mother is a prominent news personality and the circumstances are known there is no necessity for withholding the news.

g. Special clinics. Many hospitals have tumor, cancer, tuberculosis, pediatric, and other clinics that produce special articles as well as routine news stories.

The responsibility of the reporter in covering news of illness and medical techniques is eloquently expressed in the *Editorial Handbook* of the St. Paul *Dispatch* and *Pioneer Press*:

News in the field of medicine and public health is most difficult to cover because of the definitely conservative and cautious attitude of the medical profession, springing in part from a justifiable anxiety to preserve the privacy of the doctor-patient relationship, from a vivid knowledge of the consequence of premature or inaccurate publicity and also, in part, from an ineptitude in public relations that is widespread in the profession.

Knowledge of what goes on in hospitals, in research laboratories, in medical practice is not figuratively, but literally, a life and death matter, for the public. There is no profession, trade or industry the operations of which are more properly the concern of the reading public. This proper concern imposes on newspapers the responsibility to cover this sort of news as fully as possible. A socially justifiable balance between the proper demands of the reading public and the under-

standable and ethically appropriate reticence of medical practitioners is the goal of sound newspaper policy.

All hospital news should be gathered and written in an atmosphere of trust and confidence between the reporter and hospital authorities. But if the reporter learns that hospital authorities are attempting to hide bad practices, unsanitary conditions, inexperienced practitioners, or any condition vital to public health and safety, his responsibility to the public must outweigh the confidence of individuals.

**Caution:** Do not say that a person died of or from an operation. Be careful about saying that a person has a social disease or a pestilential disease. Do not use the doctor's name in the story unless it has real news value. Ordinarily the doctor's name is important when his patient is extremely important or when he gives expert testimony. It is better to say that a person died of an illness rather than from the illness. Avoid medical terms not understood by the reader. It is better to refer to the disease as "infantile paralysis" rather than poliomyelitis. If the medical term is one commonly used, like pneumonia, do not hesitate to use it. Do not try to substitute a common name for the medical term unless the common term means the same thing as the medical term. Dr. Morris Fishbein has pointed out that occasionally newspapers print "prostrate gland" for "prostate gland," or, "explanatory operation" for "exploratory operation." Do not confuse sanatorium with sanitarium (see page 417).

In stories describing the condition of a hospital patient the "condition" should be in quotes and the authority for the statement given. For example:

Condition of Doctor Geoffrey T. Long, Coon Hollow physician, was reported as "unchanged" Wednesday at Memorial Hospital, where he has been a patient since Saturday. He is suffering from a heart attack.

Do not write that a person dies of heart failure. Write "heart attack" or "a heart condition."

### EXAMPLES

*Important political figure enters hospital;  
condition and authority given*

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1—(AP)—Cordell Hull, former secretary of state, suffered a slight stroke last night, the navy reported today.

His condition was described as "satisfactory."

"Cordell Hull, who entered Bethesda (Md.) Naval Hospital on September 12 for a checkup and a rest, suffered a slight stroke during the night. His condition is now satisfactory," the navy announcement said.

Hull will be 75 tomorrow. He has been in generally poor health since he resigned his cabinet post in 1944. He has been secretary of state since 1933.

*Patient discharged; circumstances of injury reported*

Simon D. Lightman, professor of economics emeritus at Blankville University, was discharged from Memorial Hospital Friday and is confined to bed in his home, 1108 West Fir Street. He was reported in "good condition" today.

Professor and Mrs. Lightman were injured in a fall when they narrowly missed being struck by a truck in Chicago last month. Mrs. Lightman was discharged from Memorial Hospital July 2.

## 83. Epidemics

The word "epidemic" should be used with caution, and most of the time only on authority of doctors or public health authorities. It is the responsibility of the reporter to investigate rumors of epidemics and give his readers the facts, backed up with official statements. Sometimes the newspaper may have occasion to feel that local public health authorities are negligent in not telling the public facts about epidemic diseases. If the facts are clear and the need great, the reporter should tell the true story, despite official opposition. This should be the exceptional situation, however.

Do not say that a disease has reached "epidemic proportions" or that there is a "near epidemic" in the city just because you have reported five new cases of measles. If the health officials use these words, you should use them in your story, but not otherwise.

Use background facts to show your readers they need not get alarmed because you have written about the season's tenth case of infantile paralysis. You might write: "Although ten cases have been reported, the figure is still five below the annual average for the past five years." If the situation is serious, and health authorities wish to make citizens more cautious, use the same technique to let the readers know just how things stand.

Stories of contagious diseases should contain (a) name and other identification of the sick person; (b) condition of the sick person; (c) how the disease was contracted, if known—use authority; (d) others quarantined; (e) whereabouts of the patient; (f) statement of health authorities concerning the disease; (g) precautions to be taken by citizens of the community.

### EXAMPLES

*Epidemic under control; parents cautioned; word "epidemic" seems strong for this story*

An epidemic of scalp ringworm in preadolescent children in Blankville appears to be under control. Dr. Mealy O. Mye, acting director of the public health district, said Saturday.

A survey last spring of school children disclosed 91 preschool and school children had infected hairs when examined under the "Woods lamp," an ultraviolet lamp which singles out infected hairs by making them fluorescent.

The Blankville University department of bacteriology confirmed these cases of the disease to be positive for *Microsporum audouini*, the most severe and difficult type of ringworm to eradicate.

Dr. Mye presented the problem to the medical society and a committee of doctors was appointed to confer on the problem. By the end

of the summer, he reported, all known cases had been brought under medical supervision.

A new survey now establishes only 14 cases in the area, and all are under care. Similar epidemics are prevalent throughout the United States, the U. S. Public Health Service has informed Dr. Mye.

"Children should be taught to use only their own personal combs, brushes, and caps," the health director said. "The other and most important precaution is to have all children shampoo their head immediately following a haircut rather than before. Preadolescent girls, as long as this infection remains in the community, should be discouraged from visiting beauty shops.

"With these ordinary precautions, the medical society and the health department feel that the ringworm situation in Blankville will continue to improve," Dr. Mye said.

*Conservative treatment of mumps situation; caution advised; authority emphasized*

Continuing high rate of incidence of mumps and chicken pox in the first week of 1949 was attributed Thursday by Blankville public health officials to lack of careful isolation of patients.

Seventy-four cases of mumps, including some adults, and 32 of chicken pox were reported to the district in the week ending Wednesday. Seven cases of red measles also were reported.

In 1948 more than 750 cases of mumps, 402 of chicken pox, and 120 of red measles were reported. The rate of increase of mumps cases was estimated as a new district record.

"We'll keep on having cases until we have closer observation by both teachers and parents," Dr. Mealy O. Mye, acting director of the public health district, said Thursday.

"There probably is not enough attention given in the home to the isolation of the patient. The patient is kept in, but probably some slip and let other persons, including children, come into the house."

Doctor Mye said that children should not be sent to school if they have the beginning symptoms of mumps.

He urged parents to inspect daily for the following signs of beginning mumps; beginning cold; swelling of glands around the neck and ear; tightness of throat; and stiffness of jaw.

Doctor Mye said that although the high rate of incidence of mumps is not "alarming" Blankville is getting more cases than it should.

## **84. Medical Discoveries and Cures**

The reporter must be cautious about announcing cures for important diseases. He should be certain that newly announced discoveries in medical science are really new. People read such stories with a "wishful" eye so that they easily read into them more than they actually say. Stories of experiments in the areas of cancer, tuberculosis, infantile paralysis, and rare diseases must be so written that they cannot possibly be misunderstood. Otherwise many hearts will be broken in the expectation of a quick cure.

Check stories of medical discoveries and cures with medical authorities. Readability is extremely important in this kind of news, but it must not be achieved at the expense of accuracy.

The exact nature of the experiment or the discovery can be stressed by repetition. For example:

Minnesota researchers are experimenting with a new drug which may have value in combating typhoid fever, pneumonia, tularemia, undulant fever, dysentery—even tuberculosis.

It is streptomycin, one of the so-called antibiotic substances like penicillin made by organisms derived in many cases from the soil.

In the test tube and in experimental animals it has shown some promise against various diseases, including tuberculosis.

Notice that all through the above lead the writer has been careful to avoid any statement that a cure for the diseases mentioned has been found. He says "researchers are experimenting with a new drug." Then he qualifies the lead by saying that the drug "may have value" in combating the diseases. In the third paragraph he again emphasizes the experimental nature of the project by saying "in the test tube and in experimental animals."

The writer has used the same kind of caution in the following lead:

A vaccine against infantile paralysis may one of these days be found at the Johns Hopkins Hospital and, if so, a group of chimpanzees, serving as guinea pigs, will share in the credit.

Yearlong experiments on six chimps were disclosed today. Definite results are not expected for another 12 or 14 months, but Dr. Blank A. Blank said the experiments thus far tend to establish that chimpanzees once infected with the crippling disease are resistant to it the second time.

This story is merely a progress report. It promises nothing. The lead clearly says a vaccine "may one of these days be found."

Clever writers know how to play up the human interest elements in stories of unusual operations and rare diseases, without becoming maudlin. The use of conversation and eye-catching words in the lead assures best results. For example:

"You're pretty," said 5-year-old Bobby Archer as he saw his mother for the first time after his sight was gained through a delicate operation.

Bobby was born with cataracts on each eye and had never been able to see anything except as shadows.

When the bandages were moved from the child's eyes yesterday in the presence of his mother, Mrs. Margarite Archer, he pointed to her dress and asked: "What color is that, Mommie?"

The following lead attracts attention by the first four words, the "show window" of the story:

Construction of new eyelids for injured servicemen by means of skin grafts was described today by Dr. Blank E. Blank of Blankville.

The "business" of the doctor in the first sentence, plus the conversation, makes the following story of a rare operation interesting reading:

CHICAGO, Sept. 24—(UP)—The doctor tenderly removed the bandages and Betty Gould, 14, saw the world for the first time.

She touched the doctor's lips as he bent over her and asked, "What's that?"

"I'm your doctor," said the kind voice that belonged to the lips. "You're looking at my mouth."

"It moves when you talk," the girl exclaimed.

The medical-cure story should contain (a) accurate statement of the nature of the medical discovery or cure; (b) authority for the announcement of cure; (c) how the cure or discovery came about—nature of the experiments; (d) what the discovery means to society; (e) availability of the discovery or cure for immediate use; (f) advantages and disadvantages of the cure or discovery; that is, what it will and will not do; (g) how long the experiments were in progress; (h) names and identifications of scientists involved.

**Caution:** (a) check medical stories with the doctors concerned or other competent authorities; (b) be careful about weaving “old wives’ tales” or local superstitions into medical stories unless it is your purpose to explode them as myths; (c) phrase your stories so that readers will not try to accept what you write as “medical advice” and try your remedy without a doctor’s authority.

## **85. Public Health—Sanitary Inspection**

The newspaper and its public health beat reporter are in many respects the real guardians of the community’s health. Without the press to publicize the warnings and achievements of health officials their good work goes unrewarded and serves no public good. Without the press to check lazy officials and spotlight lax enforcement of health laws, tax monies are wasted and the public goes unserved.

The first responsibility of the public health reporter is to know the health laws of his community and the enforcement methods of health officials. Occasional crusades and campaigns against laxness result only in temporary relief. The reporter’s guardianship extends from day to day.

Health offices produce a great deal of excellent health information that reaches only a small percentage of the population in



pamphlet form or as departmental reports. The reporter must learn about this material and when it has public significance see that it is presented to readers in understandable language. Considerable harm may result if the reporter takes a monthly tabulation of community diseases, slaps a summary lead on it, and runs it without explanation or interpretation. Or, if he tries to create reader interest by building his lead around one rare disease reported in the community, he might mislead readers. Such reports call for interpretation, comparison with other periods, and explanations by health officials.

The public health reporter should know what diseases are prevalent, and when they are most prevalent in his community. He should cooperate with health officials in educating the public concerning these diseases. Special stories can be written along the following lines about such diseases as infantile paralysis:

- a. What to do if the disease strikes your community.
- b. What percentage of the population get the disease. What are your chances?
- c. What causes the disease?
- d. Are there various types of the disease? What are they and what are the symptoms?
- e. How does the disease germ enter the body?
- f. How can spread of the disease in the community be prevented? What community action should be taken?
- g. What age group does the disease attack most often?
- h. What is the most modern treatment of the disease?
- i. What is the death rate from the disease?

Answers to questions like those indicated above will often do much to avert panic and cause citizens to view a disease more calmly. As calm, thinking individuals they can do more to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Sanitary inspection without publication of the results is worthless. Certainly it would be poor newspapering for the reporter to publish every infraction of the sanitary code immediately after

it occurred, but continued violations should not be allowed to remain hidden in official reports that ought to be public property. Many times lists of restaurants and other food-serving establishments that fail to pass inspection remain unpublished not because officials are lax but because newspapers are. It is the responsibility of the reporter and the newspaper to work with health officials with the end that such lists become known to citizens of the community.

### EXAMPLES

*Annual health department report; state figures explained  
in terms of local community*

Six communicable diseases have run rampant throughout the state this year, but only two of them, infantile paralysis and red measles, have exceeded the yearly average in Blankville.

Doctor Thadeus L. Groaner, head of the division of communicable diseases of the state department of public health, has reported that the six diseases have shown an alarming increase during the first nine months of 1948 over a corresponding period last year. The diseases are diphtheria, measles, infantile paralysis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, typhoid fever, and whooping cough.

The Blankville public health district reported Wednesday that three of the diseases have been entirely absent from the community, and that a fourth, whooping cough, is running far short of last year's incidence. Only polio and red measles have exceeded the yearly average so far during 1948.

Four cases of infantile paralysis have been reported during the first nine months of 1948 in Blankville, three more than for a corresponding period last year. The state total has now climbed to 1,775 from January 1 through September 30, as compared with 795 in 1947. A gradual decline of the disease now has been observed, and it is believed that the crisis is past.

One hundred twenty-nine cases of red measles have been reported so far this year in Blankville, more than eight times as many as for 1947. The September total of last year was 16.

The nine-months total for measles in the state now stands at 25,834 compared with 5,722 last year. The wave of measles which occurred

during the early winter months of 1948 did not reach the heights of some previous epidemics.

Whooping cough also has run far ahead of 1947 figures for the state, but Blankville has been comparatively unaffected with only 34 cases reported against 57 for a similar period last year. The state total for 1948 is now 4,261 as compared with 2,915 for 1947.

No cases of diphtheria, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, or typhoid have been reported in the community since January 1, 1948. Absence of those three diseases has proved no surprise, however, as only one case of typhoid is listed on the records for a similar period in 1947.

A striking gain in the state has been made by diphtheria with 388 cases reported against 121 last year. The marked increase during the early part of the year was attributed to the Barnville-Norhtown outbreak. The trend is in line with the increased incidence of diphtheria throughout the country, particularly in the Eastern states.

The 38 cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever reported this year exceeds the total for any full year since the disease was first made reportable in the state in 1935. State typhoid cases this year now number 93 cases against 74 for 1947.

Decreases have been noted throughout the state in many other communicable diseases, including meningitis and scarlet fever.

## **86. Medical Freaks**

People are interested in freaks of nature, otherwise the carnival side shows would not be in business. The reporter, however, is not called upon to turn the pages of his newspaper into a side show where the misfortunes of a few persons are used to amaze the world. Stories of babies joined together at birth, persons who have been hiccuping for two years, or persons who are turning to stone should be handled with sympathy and dignity, or not at all. The feelings of the persons involved and their families should be considered above public interest and the stories so written that these persons are not embarrassed unnecessarily. Usually such stories are valuable because of the medical or scientific interest and not because of public curiosity.

As a general rule the reporter should not comment on physical handicaps unless they play an integral part in his story.

In stories of freak births the personal element can be eliminated if the reporter does not identify the parents. Before writing stories of rare diseases and afflictions of one kind or another, if the victims are to be identified, the reporter should obtain the consent of the afflicted. Detailed descriptions of freaks should be avoided since such writing is often offensive to readers.

### EXAMPLE

#### *Story of a freak birth; parents not identified*

Survival into the third day of a two-headed, four-armed baby today has centered attention of medical men on Memorial Hospital in Blankville.

X-rays have failed to determine whether the baby has two hearts but have shown that the 10-pound infant has two stomachs. The two heads with black hair and blue eyes are normal as are the arms and hands. The legs, however, are subnormal.

Delivery of the sexless child was normal and it has cried and been fed several times.

## 87. News from Medical Societies

Reporters are urged to depend more and more upon the officers of their city and county medical societies as sources of news. The American Medical Association has asked these groups to undertake increasingly the responsibility of publicizing medical news on the local basis. Doctors, particularly heads of hospitals, have begun to realize that for many years they have been misunderstood by the public because (a) they used a language that the public did not understand, and (b) they shied away from any kind of publicity. The medical societies are good check points on the general health of the area, unusual diseases, new medicines and treatments, local medical survey statistics, health needs, and general progress of the profession.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER TEN

# *“I Have Been Misquoted”*

88. Speeches and Debates	204
89. Resolutions, Proclamations, and Official Statements	211
90. Meetings and Conventions	212
91. “This Is Off the Record”	214
92. Handling Quoted Material	214
93. Watch the Speaker’s Language	215
94. Taking Notes	216

When the visiting firemen come to town and the local orators air their views from public platforms, the reporters go into action. Much of the time this kind of reporting is routine, but even so it calls for intelligence and a high sense of responsibility, as well as a thorough grasp of reporting and news-writing techniques. Many of the problems that arise are indicated in the pages that follow.

## **88. Speeches and Debates**

Speeches should be easy to report, but often they turn out to be extremely difficult for beginning reporters, and sometimes for the veteran newsman as well. The strongest complaint that speakers have against the press is contained in the words, "I have been misquoted." Many times the complaint is justified and many times it is not. Usually one of the following situations is the cause of the speechmaker's grievance:

- a. The speaker failed to realize the news value of a portion of his speech which he thought was trivial.
- b. The speaker said something that met with popular disapproval and tried to cover up by saying he was misquoted.
- c. A politician intentionally "spits into the wind" as a trial balloon and then covers up by interpreting what he said in an entirely different way.
- d. The reporter carelessly plays up in his lead some trivial point because it has high reader interest and thus distorts the speaker's meaning.



e. In paraphrasing the speaker's remarks the reporter unintentionally changes the meaning.

f. The reporter uses sentences out of the speech which confuse the reader or distort the speaker's meaning because they are not used with other sentences that qualify them.

The reporter need not lose sleep over comments a speaker makes in public and then tries to deny, but he ought to worry about distortions that come from his own unskilled writing.

The advance speech story should contain (a) name and other identification of the speaker; (b) the speaker's topic; (c) time and place of the speech; (d) occasion of the speech; (e) background facts about the speaker that will show his authority to speak on the topic chosen; (f) other speakers on the same program; (g) who will introduce the speaker; and (h) other details of the meeting.

**Caution:** Do not pack the lead with too much information. The reader interest which should be created by the high light of the story will be weakened if the high light is surrounded by too much miscellaneous matter. The advance speech story is a problem in news values. The reporter must decide which to feature in his lead: the speaker, the topic, or the occasion. Avoid general beginnings such as, "There will be a talk tonight at the high school on the subject . . ." or "A speaker from the Blankville Republican Club will address members . . ."

In the advance speech story the reporter should not try to boost attendance at the meeting by praising the speaker. Instead of using words like "prominent" and "well known" tell the readers what the speaker has done and let them judge for themselves whether he is prominent. Let the facts speak for themselves.

The story of the speech itself should contain (a) name and other identification of the speaker; (b) the speaker's topic; (c) time, place, and occasion of the speech; (d) what the speaker said; (e) who introduced the speaker; (f) other speakers on the

program; (g) miscellaneous details of the meeting; (h) speaker's qualifications.

Emphasis in the speech story lead should be on what the speaker said, not the fact that he spoke. Few speech reporters today use quote leads. Summary leads that paraphrase the keynote of a topic of wide public interest are more common. In none of the following leads do the writers use quote material. The occasion was President Truman's 1947 Army Day speech in Chicago.

President Truman issued a solemn Army Day warning today that war can happen again, possibly with a sudden flare-up in the Middle East, and asserted the nation must be strongly prepared to defend the peace in this new atomic era.

—*United Press*

President Truman, proclaiming a new "universal" foreign policy designed to oppose aggression the world over, called today for strong military forces to back it up.

—*Associated Press*

The United States will retain its full military power as a guarantee of global peace, President Truman yesterday told the world in a speech at Soldier Field, high-lighting Army Day celebration.

—*Chicago Herald-American*

President Truman, in his Army Day address here, has summoned the United States to the responsibilities of its world leadership.

To this end he has delineated, in his most concrete and powerful pronouncement on world affairs since assuming office, the framework of a foreign policy which, he emphasizes, must be universal and global.

—*Christian Science Monitor*

President Truman championed American foreign policy yesterday as a "universal" pattern to protect the weak from the strong through supporting the United Nations to the utmost.

—*Chicago Times*

President Truman, speaking yesterday at an Army Day observance in Soldier Field, a short distance south of the Outer Drive bridge on which his predecessor in 1937 warned against World War II, proclaimed an American internationalism to repair the ravages of that conflict and prevent another.

—*Chicago Sun*

## *"I Have Been Misquoted"*

President Truman reviewed a parade of powerful Army units in Chicago yesterday and then, before a crowd of 70,000 in Soldiers' Field, proclaimed a set of foreign policies reaching into every corner of the globe.

—*Chicago Tribune*

It is not necessary for the speech story writer to indicate the order of the speaker's comments. He does not write, "Senator Whatsis began his speech by saying . . . then he pointed out . . . next he told the audience . . . in conclusion he said." Ordinarily the speech story will not relate the speech in the order in which it was given, anyhow. The reporter chooses his material to agree with the high lights of the speech, regardless of the order in which those high lights were presented.

**Caution:** Use the words "speech," "address," and "talk" properly. An informal talk before a local camera club should not be called an "address."

Reporters should make an effort to get advance copies of the important speeches they are assigned to cover. This can be done by contacting publicity bureaus, secretaries, or officers of organizations which the speakers represent. If these means fail, the reporter can use the mails or telephone to contact the speaker himself. Most of the time reporters know several days in advance when the speech will be given.

**Caution:** Once you have a copy of the text of a speech, do not use that as an excuse to pass up the meeting. The speaker might not use that speech at all, or he might change it enough to change the emphasis of your story. If, because of another assignment, you find it impossible to attend the speaking, check with one or more responsible persons who did attend and ask them if the speaker adhered to his prepared speech.

## DEBATES AND FORUMS

Reports of debates and forums can be made more interesting if the principals in your stories are allowed to talk. People like

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

to read a book that has a lot of conversation in it. They will read your news stories with the same interest if they contain direct quotes from the principals. Use a summary lead to sum up the keynote of the forum or the issue being debated, and then let the principals discuss the situation.

### EXAMPLE

*Speech report of Presidential address; summary lead; Army Day details woven into general speech report*

CHICAGO, April 6—(UP)—President Truman issued a solemn Army Day warning today that war can happen again, possibly with a sudden flare-up in the Middle East, and asserted the nation must be strongly prepared to defend the peace in this new atomic era.

"Next time—if there must be a next time—we are likely to be the first target," he said. "No country is so remote from us that it may not some day be involved in a matter which threatens the peace."

His blunt warning climaxed a colorful nationwide observance of the first Army Day since 1941—an observance centered in Chicago with the President's appearance and a parade by the famed Fifth infantry (red diamond) division.

Speaking before 100,000 persons in Soldier Field, Mr. Truman restated the government's foreign policy of world peace and security through a strong United Nations organization and listed these three "essentials" for a strong America to insure the peace:

1. Prompt unification of the armed forces into a single department.
2. Extension of selective service for another year beyond its May 15 expiration date.
3. Adoption of universal training to prepare America for war, "if war unhappily should ever come again."

In urging the necessity of universal training, Mr. Truman departed from his text to warn against playing "politics" with the issue.

### NATIONAL SAFETY

"Now, even in an election year like this, no one should play politics with the national safety," he said.

This apparently was a reference to some congressional opposition to his universal training plan.

Mr. Truman was emphatic in his criticism of "closed economic blocs in Europe or any other place in the world."

He warned that creation of economic blocs would "only lead to impoverishment and isolation of the people who inhabit it (the world)."

For two hours and 15 minutes at midday, Mr. Truman had reviewed the Fifth Division on blustery Michigan Boulevard, then attended a luncheon given by Mayor Edward J. Kelly at which he hailed Chicago as "representative of the Middle west and the breadbasket of the world."

"And," the President said, "we are going to feed the world right from here."

At the conclusion of his speech, the President returned to his special train for an overnight trip back to Washington.

In a surprise statement prior to his address, Mr. Truman told a teenage press conference that he favors giving 18-year-olds the right to vote. He said they were required to serve in the armed forces, so he saw no reason why they should not vote intelligently.

At the same time, in a special message to American youth, the President urged the importance of continuing the draft for a year. He warned solemnly, as he did in his Soldier Field address, that war could happen again.

The President spoke at Soldier Field after reviewing the reinforced Fifth Infantry (red diamond) Division of 15,000 men and hundreds of tanks, guns and trucks which paraded smartly down sunny Michigan Boulevard. He spoke less than four miles down the lake front from Memorial Bridge where the late President Roosevelt delivered his "quarantine" speech in October 1937—a speech that established U.S. foreign policy for the pre-war years.

## ON STAND

On the speakers' platform with the President were Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Army chief of staff, who spoke briefly, other Cabinet members and high-ranking military leaders.

Patterson, restating his stand for universal training, said there are "millions who hate us for our victory" in World War II and that universal training is "the only way" to insure defense.

"The peace we have won shall be held firmly," he said.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Eisenhower, denouncing "saber rattling," said the Army believes "in strength without arrogance; firmness without discourtesy; loyalty without servility." America, he said, must protect its victory and remove "the remaining weeds of Axis doctrines."

### SHOW OF POWER

The speeches received emphasis from the Army's show of power—thousands of combat-equipped infantrymen and paratroopers, heavy and light tanks, guns by the score, and overhead a spectacle of speed and fighting power by 165 bombers and fighters.

President Truman said that international rivalry in the Near and Middle East, if permitted to get out of hand, "might suddenly erupt into conflict."

For that reason, he said, countries in the Middle East "must not be threatened by coercion or penetration."

He named no names but his remarks drew attention to the dispute over Russian troops in Iran—a dispute considered recently by the United Nations Security Council and apparently now settled by Russia's promise to remove her forces from the country by May 6.

Turning to the Far East, Mr. Truman in outspoken language said the United States wants peace there, too, and expects Russia, Great Britain and other nations "to pursue the same objectives."

"We recognize," he said, "that the Soviet Union, the British Commonwealth and other nations have important interest in the Far East."

"We expect understanding on their part that our objectives are dedicated to the pursuit of peace; and we shall expect them to pursue the same objectives."

### GRAVE PROBLEMS

"He said the Near and Middle East presented "grave problems" because of vast natural resources and convenient land, air and water transportation facilities. These countries, he said, are not strong enough by themselves to withstand powerful aggression.

"It is easy to see, therefore," he said, "how the Near and Middle East might become an arena of intense rivalry between outside powers, and how such rivalry might suddenly erupt into conflict.

"No country, great or small, has legitimate interests in the Near and Middle East which cannot be reconciled with the interests of other nations through the United Nations.

"The United Nations have a right to insist that the sovereignty and integrity of the countries of the Near and Middle East must not be threatened by coercion or penetration.

"The people of the Near and Middle East want to develop their resources, widen their educational opportunities, and raise their standard of living.

"The United States will do its part in helping bring this about."

If peace is to be preserved and strengthened in the area, he said, "We cannot be content merely to assure self-government and independence."

In this discussion of armed forces unification, draft extension and universal training, Mr. Truman said the United States is "a strong nation" and we are determined to remain strong . . . because only so long as we remain strong can we ensure the peace of the world."

## **89. Resolutions, Proclamations, and Official Statements**

News which comes to the reporter in the form of a public letter, formal statement, resolution, or proclamation should be handled like the speech report. Much of the time public interest is poorly served when the reporter writes up this type of news by merely slapping a lead on the text of the statement. If the statement is written in involved, technical, or official language, the reader will get little out of it. In fact, he won't even try to cut his way through the tangle of difficult words. Tell him what the proclamation means. Paraphrase the difficult parts and condense the long paragraphs. Then, quote the text if it warrants the space.

### **PUBLIC NEWS LETTER (POLITICAL)**

#### *Lead treatment*

WASHINGTON, May 9—In one of the most outspoken condemnations of isolationism to date, Charles Michelson, veteran director of publicity for the Democratic National Committee, tonight called on the people of the country to elect a Congress which will back the administration's war effort.

Mr. Michelson, in his weekly newsletter, indicated his belief that

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

a major reason why the nation is at war was because it elected an isolationist House of Representatives 24 years ago after the last World War.

### **FORMAL STATEMENT**

#### *Lead treatment*

WASHINGTON, May 9—Secretary of State Hull today reaffirmed the Atlantic Charter pledge that all nations will be granted equal access to raw materials in the postwar world. He declared that America must accept its full share of responsibility for building a better world after victory.

In a formal statement heralding the opening of foreign-trade week, May 17 to 23, the Secretary of State reminded America that the United Nations are fighting not for victory alone but also for a postwar world in which economic relationships will be based on justice and equality.

### **PROCLAMATION**

#### *Lead treatment*

WASHINGTON, May 9—Declaring that unless the massed, angered forces of humanity triumph over the Axis all will fail, President Roosevelt today proclaimed June 14 as national Flag Day and asked that the banners of all 26 United Nations be put on display.

**Caution:** Do not say that resolutions are "passed." Resolutions are adopted, bills are passed, and laws are enacted.

## **90. Meetings and Conventions**

Because meetings and conventions are routine, the reporter is likely to give them routine treatment. For that reason most of them make dull reading in the newspaper. If the reporter adopts the view that every meeting is different from other meetings and sets out to find what that difference is, he will have something for his lead. Every meeting is held for a purpose. The reporter must learn what that purpose is. If a series of events will take place at the meeting, the reporter must select the most important to high-light his lead. If he tries to mention them all, the lead



probably will read like a want ad. The item to go in the lead should be selected on the basis of (a) prominence of speakers on the program; (b) local names involved in the program; (c) local interest in a topic or topics to be discussed at the meeting; (d) recent local or national news stories to which the event can be tied; (e) whether some aspect of the meeting will affect reader's pocketbooks or living conditions; and, (f) whether the meeting is a public or private affair.

**Caution:** Avoid "holding" meetings as much as possible. Do not say Mr. Blank addressed a meeting of high-school teachers held in the county courthouse. Avoid saying a group was or will be entertained. The newspaper does not know that the audience was or will be "entertained." Say programs are presented, not "put on."

Because meeting stories are too often written as routine news, they are exceptionally wordy. In the advance story avoid such general beginnings as: "There will be a meeting of . . . the purpose of the meeting will be . . . at 9 A.M. today the club will . . . at the first meeting of the year last night." In your story of the meeting do not write: "The Camera Club met last night . . . at a meeting of . . . there was a meeting . . . the purpose of the meeting was . . . one of the most interesting meetings . . . the outcome of the meeting was."

The advance meeting story should contain (a) the purpose of the meeting; (b) time and place of the meeting; (c) sponsoring organization; (d) persons who will lead or participate in the meeting; (e) background facts about outstanding speakers; (f) kind of meeting; and (g) feature angle.

The story of the meeting itself should contain (a) what happened at the meeting; (b) time and place of the meeting (need not be as specific as in the advance story); (c) sponsoring organization; (d) names and identifications of prominent persons at the meeting; (e) kind of meeting; and (f) any feature angles.

*The public is invited:* Avoid inviting the public to attend a meeting. The paper has no authority to ask citizens to attend anything. If the meeting is open to the public, say so—and give an authority.

*Don't invite them!*

## 91. "This Is Off the Record"

Reporters should disregard all attempts by speakers to establish an "off-the-record" situation at a public meeting. What is said at a public meeting is "published" when it is spoken and cannot be "off the record." If the meeting is a private one, that is, one to which organization members and their guests only are invited, the "off-the-record" request must be respected. A reporter visiting at the home of a friend knows that he is not expected to report the comments of his host. (See Section 20, Inside or Confidential Information, page 42.)

## 92. Handling Quoted Material

What you put between quotation marks and attribute to the speaker should be accurate. The Buffalo (N.Y.) *Evening News* urges its reporters to get quotes "with precise accuracy." Say the editors: "We have no right nor wish to take liberties with the words we attribute to another within quotation marks." Do not put quotation marks around paraphrased material. Within a paraphrased sentence, if you use the speaker's words, it is proper to put them within quotation marks. For example:

The President recognized "important interests" of Great Britain, Russia, and other nations in the Far East, but asserted: "In return we expect recognition by them that we also have an interest in maintaining peace and security in that area."

The above paragraph is a paraphrase of the following material taken from the text of President Truman's Army Day address:

## *"I Have Been Misquoted"*

We recognize that the Soviet Union, the British Commonwealth, and other nations have important interests in the Far East. In return we expect recognition by them that we also have an interest in maintaining peace and security in that area.

The paraphrase or summary paragraph is a smooth device for joining together related quoted material or for introducing new ideas, for example:

"The United States," he announced at one point, "intends to join with the other sovereign republics of America in a regional pact to provide a common defense against attack."

Explaining America's interest in outside rivalries all over the globe, the President said simply:

"Remember that the First World War began in Serbia, that the peace of Versailles was first broken in Manchuria and that the Second World War began in Poland."

The following "introductory" words were all used in one speech report to lead the reader into quoted paragraphs or paraphrased material:

Departing from his prepared text . . .

In the strongest language he has used . . .

In a surprise statement . . .

Turning to the Far East, Mr. Truman in outspoken language said . . .

His blunt warning climaxed a colorful observance . . .

Mr. Truman restated the government's foreign policy of . . .

In urging the necessity of . . .

He renewed his plea for . . .

The President expressed conviction that . . .

Explaining America's interest in outside rivalries . . .

In that connection he mentioned . . .

### **93. Watch the Speaker's Language**

Do not insult a speaker by exposing his grammatical errors in your report. But, on the other hand, do not correct an error that the speaker uses intentionally for effect. A person who is

known for his colloquialisms usually prefers to be quoted that way. He would be insulted if you tried to “dress up” his talk and would be “out of character” with your readers.

## **94. Taking Notes**

Take complete notes. Don't put down one word and expect it to remind you of an entire paragraph of material you want to quote two hours after a speech. Isolated words have a way of getting “cold” so that they are meaningless when you are ready to use them. Use short cuts and abbreviated forms, but take your notes in complete sentences. Folded sheets of copy paper overflowing from your trouser pockets may give you the appearance of a veteran reporter, but these sheets will give you trouble if you take speech notes on them. You won't be able to organize your quotes when you get ready to write because they are scattered all over your folded paper. A small notebook with loose leaves is better. You can use a new page every time the speaker shifts his topic. Later the pages can be torn out and quickly sorted and numbered in the order in which they are to appear in your story.

*"I Have Been Misquoted"*

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Reporting the Arts*

95. Let the Writer Write	220
96. Concerts and Recitals	223
97. What the Painter Paints	228
98. Stage Productions	232
99. Direct from Hollywood	235

In this chapter emphasis will be on “reporting” what the artists produce, not on how to criticize them. A lot of sad writing goes into newspapers because reporters who should remain reporters attempt to be music, dramatic, or literary critics. They would be much more entertaining and much more valuable to their newspapers if they would try to be better reporters of the arts, look for facts rather than flaws in an area of expression they often do not understand.

## 95. Let the Writer Write

You probably wrote countless “book reports” for your high-school English teacher a few years back. Your technique was to copy as much of the book as possible so that you could avoid much original writing. Unless you are an experienced book critic you should write “book reports” or reviews for your newspaper instead of criticism. Combine your knowledge of reporting, interpretation, and readability to achieve a good review.

*What to report:* (a) Classify the book so the reader will understand what it’s about—fiction, nonfiction, mystery, historical novel, essays, biography, short stories, etc. (b) Is it a first book? If not, what else has the author written? (c) Is the book illustrated, indexed, footnoted? (d) Is there a preface or introduction written by someone else? (e) What do local authorities say about the book? Even though you are not an authority on the Spanish-American War, if the book covers that period, maybe a local college or high-school history teacher will comment on the authenticity of the historical references. (f) What do well-known



reviewers say about the book? If the author is a local person, what the reviewers are saying about his book is news. (g) Has the author used an unusual approach? Is the plot or nonfiction material presented through a series of letters or a journal or diary? (h) Do not give away the plot, but report enough of the situation to tell the reader the book is one he would or would not enjoy.

*How to use interpretation:* (a) If possible, associate the book or some phase of it with local history, landmarks, or ideas. Maybe the little red schoolhouse in the story was like the one that used to stand away out on Vermont Avenue. (b) Does the book have a moral, does it preach a new way of life, does it set forth a particular philosophy of government? Give specific references to back up your interpretation in this respect.

*Where readability comes in:* (a) Use language the layman will understand. Says the *Detroit News*: "Too often the critic of music writes only for musicians, the critic of art for painters, the critic of plays for actors." (b) Avoid the formal, summary type lead. Make it live with the most interesting thing you found in the book. (c) You don't have to use formal news style to present your review. Tie your facts and interpretation together with interesting things out of the book. The things that interested you probably will interest your readers.

### EXAMPLES

*Report of a book that might seem dull; the reporter makes it sound interesting by telling his readers what the book means to them*

WASHINGTON—Your Uncle Sam is selling for \$2 per copy a neat, black-bound package of dynamite entitled "Science in Agriculture."

The information assembled within the 944 pages of the Agriculture Department yearbook has changed, is changing, and will continue to change the lives of all of us.

Here is the farm revolution brought up to date, with pictures, formulas and statistics.

Here is the blueprint of tomorrow's mechanized, sanitized, and

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

electrified food factory, geared to turn out frozen fruits and precooked meals on disposable plates (no dishwashing).

This is not a story, yet it makes fascinating reading. It is a serious report of the hundreds of ways in which science is changing farm practices.

The book tells about test-tube calves, hybrid corn, and the irrigation of the West. It tells of better peaches, healthier tomatoes, and finer strawberries that airplanes bring to market.

It tells how the soldiers grew vegetables on strips of cloth on the desert isles of the Pacific, and it tells of the menace DDT is to honeybees.

It describes new industrial uses for corncobs and the whey of milk. It tells how to get the bad smell out of soybean oil and the funny taste from frozen peas.

Toward the end the authors of the book drop a coldly analytical warning that some of these changes may be coming in agriculture faster than farmers can keep up with them.

Many farmers may find themselves out of jobs as the process of using fewer men and more machinery goes on.

In the last year of the war, for example, nine men and women farmed land that 10 had farmed before the war, and the nine men and women produced 23 per cent more food.

Weather helped. Extra work helped. But 60 per cent of the improvement was due to "science in agriculture."

The next big change to look for seems to be displacement of farm workers in the South, which has lagged in "production per worker."

Also in the cards seem to be bigger, but still family-run, farms, greater capital investments, and strict cost accounting.

You can order the book from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

—Chicago Daily News

### *A straightforward, noncritical report on a volume of nonfiction*

World War II was lost, in a sense, before it was begun, according to Admiral Karl Doenitz, head of Germany's submarine service.

In a report written after the end of the war, Doenitz declared that "Germany was never prepared for a naval war against England. . . . A realistic policy would have given Germany many a thousand U-boats at the beginning."

For that failure Adolf Hitler was to blame.

But, as in World War I, the U-boats came close to knocking England out of the war. Only the policy of the United States of all aid short of war, and our great industrial capacity after we got in, prevented the Nazis from scoring a victory in the Battle of the Atlantic.

The documented and dramatic story of that battle from Sept. 1939, to May 1943, is told by Samuel Eliot Morison in *THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC*.

It is the first, chronologically, of a 13-volume history of U.S. naval operations in World War II; but the second of the set to be published. The first covered naval operations in North African waters.

## **96. Concerts and Recitals**

Newspapers are under no obligation to promote local musical presentations or stage productions. Advance notices should be limited to their newsworthiness. The newspaper reporter cannot set a precedent by attempting to build attendance for one concert unless he intends to follow the same policy for all concerts. The following matters should be interesting to (a) the person who plans to attend the concert, and (b) the person who is trying to decide whether to go:

1. Time and place of the concert
2. Sponsors of the concert
3. Where tickets are on sale and the hours during which they may be bought
4. Description of the concert or recital
5. Names and background of artists who will appear

The inexperienced music critic quickly brings down upon his head the ridicule of the local music world. Unless he can get an expert to write his story for him, he had better confine his writing to a clear report of what happened after the artist appeared on stage. His report can be interesting and lively if he was keenly aware of audience reactions. He can add to his story by quoting from the artists themselves, if he took the trouble to in-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

interview them after the performance. The following material should be included in the report:

- a. Classify the music of the artist—classical, popular, humorous, somber, the work of one composer, the works of composers of a particular nationality. etc.
- b. Reactions of the audience—What selections were most popular? What type of music was most popular?
- c. How many numbers were presented that were not on the program? What selections were presented as encores?
- d. Into how many parts was the program divided? Was each part devoted to a particular kind of music?
- e. What were the opening and closing numbers?
- f. Name and importance of the accompanist. Did he present special numbers? Were there encores?
- g. Was there humor in the performance?
- h. Did the artist sing in several foreign tongues?
- i. Was the music selected for its seasonal appeal?
- j. Was this the first recital or concert of the season? Last of a series?
- k. Name and importance of the conductor, if there was one.

**Caution:** Do not attempt to describe the work of the musician or singer with such general phrases as “excellent tonal qualities,” “good emotional projection,” “peak of sonorous force,” or “overpowering precision.” Avoid trite expression such as “appreciative audience,” “varied program,” “held the audience spellbound,” “brilliant concert,” “heartly applause,” and “lilting strains.”

### EXAMPLES

*Story of a Robeson concert; reported as “news”; the reporter points out a lot of little things most of the audience probably forgot but will remember when they read the story*

An audience that filled nearly four-fifths of Huff gymnasium Wednesday night applauded Paul Robeson's performance of his scheduled

concert, but saved its greatest ovation for such impromptu offerings as "Old Man River," and "I Suits Me."

If any of his listeners were disgruntled by the famous bass-baritone's belated appearance on the campus, they gave no indication of it in their enthusiastic welcome of his concert, which included in addition to selections listed on the program, several others which outweighed them in audience popularity.

The artist originally was to have sung Tuesday night, but because of a "misunderstanding" on his part failed to appear.

Robeson devoted the first section of the five-part program to a collection of folk songs of other lands. He opened with a lilting English air, "Over the Mountains," followed by an old German piece, "Mein Freud Mocht Sich Wohl Mohren." On the third number, "Invocazione de Orfeo," the noted singer appeared to fit his voice to the high-ceilinged gymnasium with a powerful rendition of the old Italian song.

He closed the first part of the program with "L'Amour de Moi," and another English ballad, "Three Poor Mariners."

It was on the encore to this section that the enthusiasm of the audience for Robeson began obviously to grow. He chose as his encore piece another old English number, "Oh, No, John," delivered with a timing and inflection that sent laughter rippling through his audience.

After a piano interlude by William Schatzkamer, concert pianist with the Robeson party, the singer returned for four offerings in a serious vein and then several encore selections.

He began with "Lord God of Abraham," from Mendelssohn's oratorio, "Elijah." Then came the Boris' somber prayer to God from "Boris Godounoff," in which Boris, Russian regent of about 1600, pleads for mercy for his children.

In "After the Battle," a haunting protest against war by Moussorgsky, Robeson held his listeners hushed. He ended the heavy, religious section with "Hassidic Chant," a rabbi's prayer that the burden of sorrow and suffering be lifted from Israel.

Among the encores to the four serious numbers were the popular "Let My People Go," and other colored spirituals and folk songs, all well-received by an audience that asked for, and obtained, six encores. Included in the encores was "Madrid Is a Wondrous City," described by Robeson as a "battle hymn of the Spanish republic."

The closing part of the Robeson performance included five colored folk songs, in some of which the pianist, Lawrence Brown, who also

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

arranged part of the numbers, supplied the tenor voice. They were the "Hammer Song," "Weepin' Mary," "By and By," and rolling "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and on a jubilant note, "Ev'ry Time I Feel de Spirit."

While this concluded the scheduled concert, Robeson came back to the stage again and again for eight additional numbers in all. His first encore, and one that sent an appreciative murmur through the audience when its title was announced, was "Old Man River."

Next he gave a song from his role in the picture "Showboat," "I Suits Me," delivered by Robeson the actor as well as Robeson the singer, and left the audience laughing an answer to the singer's own broad grin, and "My Curly-Headed Baby."

Then the bass-baritone shifted to numbers with a more political connotation, including what he described as "a Chinese song of resistance," "Arise," and a "modern Soviet song," "From Border to Border."

He gave "It Ain't Necessarily So," then, as his closing song, "The House I Live In." As the final event of the evening, Robeson took a passage from Shakespeare's "Othello," in a production of which he played the title role, and held the audience quiet while he gave Othello's last speech, just after the slaying of Desdemona.

Just before the last two numbers, Robeson stepped to the microphone to thank the audience for its warm reception, and to apologize for the date he missed Tuesday night.

—Champaign (Ill.) *News-Gazette*

*"Rubinoff and his violin" reported; audience reaction watched closely*

"Rubinoff and His Violin" completely captivated an audience of 1,000 persons Monday night in the Champaign junior high gymnasium.

In their second appearance in this community in nine years, the artist and his Stradivarius violin received a welcome accorded few masters.

Highlights of the concert and radio star's appearance here were the four premier performances of orchestral and piano arrangements as violin solos. Playing his own arrangements, Rubinoff presented the initial performance of "Warsaw Concerto," "Clair de Lune," "Rhapsody in Blue" and Chopin's "Polonaise."

## CONCERTO IS FAVORITE

The maestro transcribed the orchestral arrangement of the well-known Addinsell "Concerto" into an effective violin selection which proved to be the favorite of the audience. The concerto describes in music lonely, proud, war-blackened Warsaw, which Rubinoff knew as a child and which he pictured in stirring tones from his violin. The concerto has been converted into a popular classic by the modern orchestras, and Rubinoff deftly demonstrated the power of the violin in producing strong tones.

The other three initial violin selections, known to the audience in their orchestral arrangements, rapidly became popular with the listeners as violin pieces as Rubinoff transformed them.

The internationally known artist exhibited not only a mastery of his instrument but also a knowledge of audience appeal as he varied his program from the most modern "boogie woogie" to the heaviest classical pieces.

## "DON'T FENCE ME IN"

Played earlier to a crowd of 1,700 young grade and high school students, his interpretation of the recent Hit Parade "first," "Don't Fence Me In," received the spontaneous applause of the adults. With expressive eye and hip movements, the artist presented nine variations in style from the symphonic to the jazz and from Strauss waltz to Sousa march. He concluded the number with the 215-year-old violin giving the modern "wolf whistle."

Rubinoff opened his program with his own composition, "Dance of the Russian Peasant," which is sadly reminiscent of his native country. One of the most popular and appealing selections played by the star was the lovely "Intermezzo," and a thrilled hush settled over the audience as the sweet music swept over the gymnasium. The proverbial pin could have been heard, but no one even dropped a program.

## PLAYS "WHEN DAY IS DONE"

The Russian-born violinist ran the gamut in his performance, playing the tantalizing "Tango Tzigane," the first jazz violin solo in America, "Fiddlin' the Fiddle," and the semi-classical "Souvenir."

The versatile Rubinoff also played the number which was most requested by his radio audience, "When Day Is Done," adding a

modern swing arrangement on the second chorus. The selection proved to be one of the favorites of the local audience.

One of the most difficult selections by the violinist was his concluding number, "Dance Russe," which the artist played in his only movie role. His dexterous pizzicato technique won the artist his first curtain call, which he followed by playing the famous "Blue Danube Waltz," dedicating it to the "oldsters" in the audience.

#### "TAPS" IS MEMORIAL

His second post-program selection was the beautiful "My Buddy." Rubinoff asked that the gymnasium lights be turned off, and on the blue-lighted stage, he played the ever popular song, interspersing it with "Taps" as a memorial to the fallen comrades of the American Legion, sponsors of the concert.

Rubinoff said to his applauding audience, "This kind of applause doesn't go to my head, but to my heart."

The violinist was accompanied by Makofka Alexander, dexterous pianist who played six solos, including the intricate "Fantasie Impromptu" by Chopin, the "Ritual Fire Dance" and ending with "Boogie Woogie Etude," a mixture of modern swing and concert étude.

—Champaign (Ill.) *News-Gazette*

### **97. What the Painter Paints**

What the painter paints the reporter can report, if he has a keen eye. He does not have to be an art critic to observe that certain paintings have brilliant colors and others appear somber, that some are done in oils and others in water colors, and that some artists always exhibit nudes while others prefer ocean scenes. The following check list is offered to help you with the art-exhibit story:

- a. When did the exhibit open, or when will it open?
- b. What is the closing date and what hours may the paintings be seen each day?
- c. Where is the exhibit being held and what is the name of the sponsoring organization or individual?



- d. What is the importance of the exhibit?
- e. Characterize the exhibit—competitive, contemporary, paintings all by one artist, an exhibition of water colors or oils, exhibit contains works produced in a particular geographical area (works of American artists, New York artists, Blankville County artists).
- f. Which paintings are prize winners?
- g. What are some of the outstanding subjects—outstanding from the standpoint of the impressions they made upon the reporter?
- h. How many paintings are being exhibited? How many artists are represented?
- i. Does a particular kind of art—surrealism, impressionism—dominate the show?
- j. Background of the artist or artists.
- k. Are any of the paintings by newcomers? By local persons or persons known locally? By extremely prominent artists?
- l. What is the most popular subject matter? Is there enough of a trend indicated in the subjects chosen to justify mention of a tie-up with the times?
- m. How many of the paintings are outstanding because of their brilliant coloring? Because of their sobriety?
- n. Comments from local artists or art experts.
- o. Which paintings caused most comment on opening day? Which attracted largest crowds?

**Caution:** When you use the terminology of the artist explain the terms or use them in such a way that their meaning is clear. You are writing for (a) the art expert; (b) the layman who has seen the show and will read your story to see if you got the same impressions he did or noticed the same things he noticed; and, (c) the layman who has not seen the show and wants to learn if it is worth visiting.

The check list given above is also useful for reporting pho-

tography exhibits, the work of the sculptor, and displays of fine craftsmanship in wood and metal.

### EXAMPLE

*Coverage of contemporary art show; press interview material included*

A little bit of everything, from far right to extreme left—with experimental methods predominating—will await visitors to the University of Illinois competitive exhibition of contemporary art, which opens Sunday.

Practically all the important types of present-day American painting are included in this cross-section of 150 paintings, 75 by known artists and 75 by relative newcomers in the art world.

Subject matter of their works contains an abnormally large amount of depression and sadness—war ruins, an animal devouring a bird—plus much escapist fantasy and, in another vein, a surprising quantity of carnival and circus scenes, but few even of these are happy paintings.

Further reflecting the post-war world—none of the paintings is more than three years old—is an increasing interest in the Negro and his sociological problems as an art subject.

The 75 invited works were selected by a faculty committee, which to make certain that the paintings exhibited would represent a genuine cross section of contemporary American work, chose, not the artists, but the individual paintings.

The judges—Roland McKinney, Jerry Farnsworth and Karl Zerbe—also selected from the uninvited items those that would cover as wide a range as possible.

"We should, especially in a university, give all honest expressions of desire for change a hearing, in art as in other fields," Prof. Frank J. Roos, head of the art department, declared Tuesday in a press interview of the exhibit. "Progress can only be achieved through change and evolution.

"Controversy is inherent in the idea of change. This exhibition should give rise to some healthy controversy. A sound evaluation of the present state of art can only be achieved through an objective study of the varying contemporary trends.

"Perhaps the most important fact for the observer to remember is

that the paintings which he finds strange are necessarily present because they represent a significant number of other paintings of a similar type being produced today. Any comment on the content of this exhibition should be directed, not at the jury, but at our society. The artists as represented here are essentially mirroring, in their works, the forces which influence them as individuals."

If the artist's function is to communicate with his audience, then the non-artistic laymen will find little in the many abstractions, and scattering of surrealistic and existentialistic works which will answer this purpose.

Art students and students of the arts, on the other hand, should find the exhibition stimulating, and even the layman will find it interesting, if only to try and figure out what they are driving at.

Probably a third of the artists have been represented in recent Carnegie shows, regarded as tops. Some of the works shown here have won prizes in that and other shows.

Winners of the \$7,500 in purchase prizes for the U. of I. show will be announced at a reception from 8 to 11 P.M. Saturday in the galleries of the Architecture building which, together with the Hall of Casts and a classroom—No. 120—contain the exhibition.

State officials, from Gov. Dwight H. Green on down, the board of trustees, U. of I. officials and the University Senate, patrons of the arts here and throughout the state, have been invited to the reception, along with exhibiting artists.

Professor Roos noted that every type painting except two are included in the exhibit—there are no primitives and no "Sunday painters," with little or no training. "If any part of the exhibit gives anyone esthetic indigestion," he commented, it is only a reflection of the times, like third parties.

There is a near primitive, "Mexican Park," by Copeland C. Burg. And there are some conservatives, still lifes by such well-known artists as Walt Kuhn, and a nude by Farnsworth.

(Judges Farnsworth and Zerbe were both invited to exhibit, but were ineligible for prizes.) Zerbe shows an encaustic, "The Golden Hat."

Farnsworth's wife, Helen Sawyer, exhibits one of the carnival scenes, and there's another husband and wife combination, John Teyral, of the Cleveland school of art, and Hazel Janicki Teyral whose "Fragment: Three Heads," is one of the most sensitive and delicate works in the show.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Farnsworth once served as a Carnegie visiting professor of art at the U. of I., and two of the other three Carnegie professors who have been here are represented—Robert Philipp, “Nude Combing Her Hair,” and Frederic Taubes, “Angel and the Darkness.”

Jon Corbino's “Three Horsemen” will be reproduced in color for the cover of the March Art Digest to illustrate the show. Louis Bosa's “Welcome Home” won a prize in the 1946 Pepsi-Cola show, and many visitors probably will remember it as a calendar illustration.

Hans O. Hofmann exhibits “The Third Hand,” an example of pure existentialism, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, one of the founders of modern art who has since died, shows a puzzler, “ChI FebII.”

I. Rice Pereira's “Red, Yellow and Blue” is a nationally-known painting, and was a winner in the 1945 Pepsi-Cola show. It is a pure geometric abstraction.

Karl Priebe, one of several exhibiting artists who have been featured in Life magazine recently, shows a fantasy, “The Fronfroneur.” Zolton Sepeshy—first prize winner in the Carnegie show—also is represented, along with John W. Taylor, who received honorable mention in that show.

Robert Mac D. Graham, a veteran, exhibits a pleasing throwback to the 19th century technique in a modern subject, “New Guinea Beer Party.” Another war subject is Mitchell Siporin's “Winter Soldiers,” reflecting his army service in Italy.

John Marin, recently voted by painters as the best living American painter in a Look magazine survey, shows a modern work, “Movement—Sea and Sky.”

The show will be open from 9 A.M. until noon and 1 to 5 P.M. daily and 1 to 5 P.M. on Sundays through March 28.

—Champaign-Urbana (Ill.) *Evening Courier*

## **98. Stage Productions**

Most stage productions reported by local newsmen are of the “home-talent” variety presented by schools, civic organizations, and dramatic groups. Reader interest in stories of these productions is high because of the many local persons who participate. The reporter who fails to mention all of these persons will lose the reader interest their names would have added to his write-up.

Don't confine your report to the activities of the main characters alone. Tell about the backstage people, the costume makers, and the directors. Here is a check list for your guidance:

a. Names and parts taken by all who had anything to do with the show.

b. Correct name of the play and the author.

c. Actors and situations which drew most applause or laughter.

d. Characterize the play as a comedy, tragedy, mystery, musical, etc.

e. Does the play have a moral or is its purpose merely to entertain?

f. Special lighting or costumes required. Was there elaborate scenery necessary?

g. Have local persons who appear in the play taken parts in other home talent shows?

h. Is there a large or small cast?

i. What is the background of the director or directors?

j. Interview stage manager, director, property manager, costume designer, and scene painters for special problems in their departments.

**Caution:** If the show runs more than one performance, do not reveal too many details of the plot so that it is spoiled for others who wish to attend. Do not expect the amateur actors to perform like professionals. Try to play up the good qualities of the acting rather than the mistakes that are made.

#### EXAMPLE

*Report of a faculty players production; audience reactions carefully explained*

An adult audience was captivated Friday evening by the children's classic, "Alice in Wonderland," as staged in the Rogers Hall theatre by the Faculty Players club of Blankville University.

Grownups must not assume that the animation of Lewis Carroll's

famed piece is simply a Saturday matinee treat for the grade-school set. A largely oldster opening night turnout had a great time.

And while the patrons relished the offering, the players appeared to be having the time of their lives. It was the enthusiasm and delight of the cast which did as much as anything in putting across the three-act piece of wonderful nonsense.

The audience, with but a few youngsters on hand, was impressed by the point and edge of the dialogue. The values and logic therein can really be appreciated only by adults. They applauded the soundness of the so-called "nonsense."

Greater appreciation was shown for "Alice" as portrayed with surprising childlike simplicity by Mrs. Bolger Piper.

But Wilbur Smitley as the quipping white rabbit, Burt Mocksim as the singing mock turtle, Wulberforce Von Schultz and Roger Pettie, the playful Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Paul Armsbee, the sleepy dormouse, and Karl O. Footpad, the March Hare and Mad Hatter, were outstanding in character parts. All of the supporting players, in fact, were energetically amusing.

At times they lacked some of the intended subtlety. But they never lacked zest for the task.

Students in the audience received a big boost at the sight of their professors cavorting about the stage costumed as bunnies, a caterpillar, turtle, and what not. None of the customers could pass over lightly the technical problems involved in designing and constructing the masks.

Despite the complete disguises the players managed to put across the feeling that they were living characters. The mock turtle, for instance, was the caricature of a doleful human being—not merely a terrifying monstrosity.

One of the biggest howls came in the first act when a pig, played by himself, refused to walk across the stage but had to be pushed, pulled and prodded from wing to wing.

In the cast were Nelson Nelson as the caterpillar; Mrs. Thomas O. Boocase, the duchess; Martha Huster, the ill-tempered cook; Arlene Dodger, the frog-footman; Mrs. Ralph Cocker, the gryphon; Arthur O. Day, the king of hearts; Earl J. Aster, the knave of hearts; Mrs. Fred Simpkins, the red queen; Mrs. Porter Carlbloom, the white queen; and George Custer, the executioner.

The three-act production, dramatized by Cora H. Shakespeare, was to be presented again at 2 and 8 P.M. Saturday.

## **99. Direct from Hollywood**

Newspapers that lack trained personnel for adequate review or criticism of local movies often use Hollywood publicity releases stripped of all words and phrases praising the production. What is left is far short of satisfying to the reader. For example:

Revival of "Stanley and Livingston" with Spencer Tracy as the journalist Stanley, sent by his paper to find Dr. Livingston, played by Walter Brennan, in the heart of Africa, will show today, Monday, and Tuesday at the Fantastic Theatre. Costarring is Nancy Kelly.

Wednesday and Thursday the Fantastic will present the technicolor movie version of Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit" starring Rex Harrison and Constance Cummings in the English film.

"The Red House," a mystery, starring Edward G. Robinson, Judith Anderson, and Lon McCallister, will show at the Fantastic on Friday and Saturday.

Such stories merely repeat what the movie advertisements say and are not worth the space they take up. Newspapers that use the Hollywood releases with no changes go to the other extreme. They confuse the reader by trying to make him believe every movie is a "superproduction."

The reader wants one of two things: a report that will help him decide which movie to see on his evening off, or a report that will tell him things about the movie that he missed. He does not want the local reporter to tell him that such and such is the greatest movie ever to play in Blankville. He wants to hear what the show is all about, and then make up his own mind. The following points will help you develop a good movie report:

- a. Name of the movie and the star players; is it an original screen play or was it taken from a novel or short story?
- b. What actors or scenes received the most audience attention?
- c. Characterize the movie as a murder mystery, musical, historical drama, war picture, etc.
- d. Tell briefly what the show is about but do not give the plot away. In a murder mystery do not tell "who done it."

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

- e. Are there historical inaccuracies in the show?
- f. Does the movie follow accurately the novel or short story from which it was taken?
- g. Was the color photography lifelike? Cite specific instances.
- h. Is the movie one of a series of stories with the same theme or dealing with the same general topic?
- i. Is the movie especially long or standard length?
- j. Is the movie directed toward a particular age group?

Of all the arts the movies offer the best opportunity for the local reporter to develop his reviewing technique. And his efforts are most needed in this area. In practically every town in the nation movie houses are open afternoon and evening and customers attend by the millions. Many of them are dissatisfied with what they see because they have been misled by publicity releases or were unable to inform themselves about the shows because good reviews were not available. It is true that many weekly and monthly magazines review movies coming from Hollywood, but the local reporter must think of the persons who know little beyond what they read in his newspaper or hear over their radios.

Movie reporting also offers the reporter an excellent opportunity to develop his powers of observation. He will be immensely satisfied to learn that he has correctly judged the reactions of a movie audience or detected features about the picture that others missed. To report a movie adequately the newsman should see the picture at least two times. The first time he sees it he will be too interested in the plot and characters to be critical. The second time he will notice many things he missed before.

### **EXAMPLE**

*Report on "Nightmare Alley"; interesting lead; film interpreted as "rough fare"*

Ever hear of a "geek"? Neither did I, and all I know after seeing "Nightmare Alley" is that they are alcoholics employed in carnivals



for use in some sort of stunt, apparently too disagreeable to be shown on the screen.

Even the insensitive carnival troupers consider them pretty low specimens of humanity, and Tyrone Power, as Stan Carlisle, a young barker, wonders at such degradation.

Handsome, shrewd, and persuasive, the possessor of a quick mind and a quicker tongue, the spieler soon graduates from the honky-tonk ranks, but not before he has made good use of the amorous Zeena and her drunken husband, Pete. He learns the code which made them a big-time mind-reading act; reluctantly marries pretty Molly, and is soon performing successfully in night clubs.

All goes well until he meets Lilith, a glib and glamorous psychologist who is even shrewder and more crooked than he—and that's something. They concoct a scheme to mulct a couple of her elderly and wealthy patients—the lady's files provide ample material for preying on the gullible and neurotic—and the thieves prosper until they fall out.

The entire cast is excellent, with special honors going to Mr. Power, who is competent and believable throughout; Joan Blondell as a blowsy card-reader; pretty little Coleen Gray as the mind-reader's innocent wife, and Ian Keith as the drunken wreck who was once a famed performer. The dialogue has plenty of punch, and the photography, especially in the tawdry tent world, is excellent.

If you like your movies rough and realistic, you'll find this one entertaining for the most part.

"Nightmare Alley" was produced by 20th Century Fox from the novel by William Lindsay Gresham. The movie was directed by Edmund Goulding.

—Chicago *Tribune*

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *News in Statistics*

<del>100.</del> Budgets	242
101. Financial Statements	247
<del>102.</del> Election Results	251
103. Taxes and Tax Levies	255
104. Business Reports	263
105. Weather Data	277
106. Statistics Make Features	280
<del>107.</del> Sports	283
108. Know These Terms	286

Complicated tables, financial statements, long lists of figures, and mimeographed sheets of statistics of one kind or another are the fleshless bones of government. In the hands of responsible, conscientious reporters, however, new flesh and blood are added to make the dry skeletons live and talk for readers. Through interpretative writing the reporter reveals the successes and failures of government. He squeezes human interest from dry facts. He warns of impending disaster and rejoices in hopeful trends. Without the reporter to interpret statistics and the newspaper to print them much of the real meaning of government would be lost to the reader. Responsible reporting of the "business" of government helps make the newspaper a fourth branch of government.

## 100. Budgets

A budget represents what an agency of the government or a private organization expects to spend during a designated period. It represents the financial needs for the particular agency to operate as the policy makers desire. A "budget message" may accompany the itemized list of proposed expenditures or the budget may be explained by a finance officer to members of a legislative body. In either event the reporter should study the proposal carefully with the following points in mind:

- a. Are there new items in the budget, expenditures which never have appeared before?
- b. What does the term "miscellaneous" mean? Check with budget officers to learn what funds this item covers.

c. Does the budget statement contain a number of general headings which mean little or nothing? Check with budget officers in order to break down such headings as "public welfare" and "community facilities." Find out how much money goes where.

d. Watch for items which have resulted from recent public pressure or have made the news columns in recent months. For example, if there has been considerable talk about employees' salaries, does the budget provide for salary raises?

Is the over-all figure higher or lower than in recent years?

e. What does the budget reveal about the cost of government?

f. Does the budget represent an economy wave or do the figures show the opposite?

g. What public improvements are represented in the budget? Are there expenditures for new buildings, roads, parks, etc.?

h. What is the heaviest item in the budget? Is this item heavier or lighter than in previous years?

i. What particular departments have felt the economy ax and which will receive additional funds?

j. What are the political implications of the budget, if any?

k. What are the social implications of the budget? Does the government agency spend extremely large sums for crime detection and relatively small sums for education and public welfare?

l. Is this a "balanced" budget? Will there be a surplus at the end of the year or will the governmental agency operate in the "red"?

Answers to many of these questions can be found in budgets of other fiscal periods. The budget for one year means little when it is studied alone. Trends, rises and declines in certain kinds of expenditures can easily be seen when the current budget is compared with those of previous years.

Sometimes it is necessary for governmental agencies to prepare "deficiency" or "emergency" budgets toward the end of a

fiscal year when funds run low. This type of budget is presented to the governing body along with a plea for a "deficiency" or "emergency" appropriation. Such budgets should be studied carefully and reported in the same manner as the main budget.

**Caution:** When you write the budget story do not give the reader too many facts to digest at any one time; that is, do not pack your paragraphs so full of figures that he cannot see the woods for the trees. Give the reader a few facts and figures and then tell him what they mean to him before you introduce new data.

### EXAMPLES

*Federal budget interpreted; budget and President's budget message are sources for the story.*

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11—The first balanced budget in 18 years is in prospect for the United States, with President Truman's transmission to Congress of a historic budget message calling for the expenditure of \$37,500,000,000 in fiscal 1948.

This message injects the first great controversial issue into the new White House-Capitol Hill cooperation, for the Republicans hold that the budget can be pared to \$30,000,000,000, and taxes simultaneously reduced. Mr. Truman emphatically disagrees on both points.

Revenues for fiscal 1948 will total \$37,700,000,000 under the President's budget calculations, resulting—if estimates prove correct—in a Treasury surplus for the first time since 1930, a neat little surplus of \$200,000,000.

### RECESSION SHADOW

Any kind of serious business recession would spoil the hopeful anticipations, but the Truman Administration contends strongly that any recession will be slight and short, and won't change budget policy.

On the other hand, if Congress would increase postal rates and retain luxury excise taxes, as the President's message recommends, the budget surplus could be boosted to \$1,800,000,000.

Mr. Truman recommends that any such surplus be applied immediately to reducing the \$259,000,000,000 national debt. Even if the



nation should reduce the debt at a rate anything like 1.5 billion dollars a year, it would take a long, long time.

The nation's 1948 balance sheet, down but slightly from the \$42,-500,000,000 budget of fiscal 1947, reflects the fact that, although war aftermath expenses are tapering off, it costs plenty to maintain the United States in its new position of world responsibility and leadership.

## DEFENSE TOPS LIST

National defense, costing \$11,256,000,000, is by far the heaviest item, and most of that figure goes for the operating expenses of the Army and Navy, plus research. The \$645,000,000 in occupation costs of armies overseas is charged to "international affairs" in the 1948 budget.

Next in expenditure are veterans' services and benefits, totaling \$7,343,000,000. Costs for veterans' pensions, hospitals, and education will be increased in fiscal 1948. Mr Truman says present laws are adequate to take care of the veterans—no bonus marchers need apply.

Third highest expense is the most fixed of "fixed obligations"; \$5,-000,000,000 interest on the mammoth national debt.

Next comes "international affairs and finance," costing \$3,500,000,-000 compared with \$6,400,000,000 spent in 1947. This sum the Administration estimates will be spent on international relief, promotion of world trade, and reconstruction and foreign lending.

## BUREAU COSTS SLASHED

Some Republican legislators may disagree strenuously here, but many items such as the loan to Britain payments and Philippines war damage are already contractual commitments.

Anticipating the Republican economy drive and pushing his advertised "cooperation with Congress" to a shrewd peak, Mr. Truman has wielded the economy ax on the Government bureaus with a strong hand and now has mobilized every argument he can find to prove that the budget cannot be shredded further.

"It is a tight budget," the President stressed to press reporters at a budget seminar this week. "I believe it is fair to say that no department or agency feels that its needs are fully met. In every borderline case, the decision has been to eliminate expenditures rather than to include them."

The message had to admit, however, that the budget for the current

year, fiscal 1947, will show a deficit of \$2,300,000,000 instead of the \$1,900,000,000 forecast last month. The President says this increase was due largely to more veterans taking more advantage of benefits, including free education. It also was due to failure to pare public works as much as first promised.

## WHERE ECONOMY AX FELL

The budget message, though, does indicate where the ax has fallen.

For instance, of 26 emergency agencies in operation on VJ-Day, 21 have been liquidated, and three others are in process of liquidation.

Again, the Government civilian personnel total is down to 2,300,000 (including those abroad) compared to 3,770,000, the wartime peak.

The Republicans in precampaign oratory promised to fire two-thirds of the 3,000,000 Government employees, and thus save \$3,000,000,000. It remains to be seen how many employees they can actually discharge.

Mr. Truman argues in his message that three present agencies, the Veterans Administration, Post Office and Treasury (taxation) Departments now account for, by themselves, almost the figure which represented the total number of prewar Government employees, 900,000.

## UPSETTING FACTORS

Whereas Mr. Truman presented to Congress a balanced budget, if Congress were to take him at his word and heed all the suggestions for enlarged social security coverage, sickness insurance, and new-horizon legislation which he casually mentions as future necessities, the total 1948 expenditures would be far beyond the proposed \$37,500,000,000 budget.

"Today, our great new frontiers are in river-valley developments, in air transport, in new scientific discoveries, and in application of the new science and technology to human progress," says the President. "These new frontiers can be developed only by the cooperation of Government and private enterprise."

But, fortunately for the "balance," the President does not include the cost of any new TVA's or of socialized medicine.

## FIXED EXPENSES

Mr. Truman feels that if one lumps together mandatory expenses such as debt service and veterans' benefits, and items which have been

"pared to the bone" such as national defense, then approximately \$33,000,000,000 of the total budget represents virtually "fixed expenses."

Figuring it another way, five items—debt service, tax refunds, national defense, international commitments, and veterans' benefits—account for \$29,200,000,000 or nearly four fifths of the total.

That leaves a little more than one fifth of the budget for regulation and improvement of transport and communication (\$149,000,000 to the Civil Aeronautics Administration, for instance); development of natural resources (here the news-making item is \$444,000,000 devoted to atomic energy research, which compared with \$385,000,000 allocated in the 1947 budget); construction of public works, aid of farmers, subsidies and grants to states, education, security, housing, general research, and liquidation of war surpluses.

And, oh, yes, the operation of the established, old-time governmental departments and agencies.

Mr. Truman has made his case for a balanced budget and governmental economy "thus far and no farther." It is now the Republican Congress' turn to see whether it can retrench further.

*—Christian Science Monitor*

## **101. Financial Statements**

A financial statement is the governmental agency's "accounting" to the people, or the board of directors' "accounting" to the stockholders. It tells how the agency actually spent the monies that were appropriated in accordance with the budget request. The financial statement is made public at the end of the fiscal year and reveals whether the agency operated at a profit or loss or broke even. When studying a financial statement the reporter should have in mind the following:

a. What about specific departments of the government? Do some show profits while others reveal losses?

b. What departments are self-supporting? Are their assets greater or less than in previous years?

c. What was the governmental agency's largest income source?

What were some of the other major sources? Which sources yielded less income than in previous years? Which yielded more?

d. In respect to local government how much money came from fines, fees, and sale of licenses? Were these funds more or less than in previous years?

e. What was the heaviest expenditure during the fiscal year? Were there any unusual expenditures? Does the financial statement indicate a profit or loss for the year?

f. How much money was used for retirement of government debts?

### INTERPRETATION

The chief obligation of the newsman who reports a financial statement is to tell his reader where public monies came from and how they were spent. His secondary objective should be to explain to the reader what the governmental fund receiving and spending process means in terms of good or bad government. The reader should also be told what government finances mean to him personally. In addition to telling him that it took fifty million dollars to run the state university last year, tell him that the cost to him was three-fifths cents per day in taxes. Or, tell him that for every dollar paid by students as tuition and fees his tax money helped the state contribute instruction costing more than four dollars. Tell him what state government or city government takes from his pocketbook—and why.

If you set up your financial statement in tabular form, give it a personal touch. Make it address the readers. For example:

*Blankville County Receipts:* This is really big business. Our Blankville County government partnership took in a total of \$2,240,967.76 in 1948. The county started the year with a balance on hand of \$652,308.53.

1. TAXES brought in,	\$1,497,361.94
2. The state sent us	324,802.13
which included about \$248,000 to pay for homestead credits allowed here; \$75,000 as our	

county's share of the gas tax; \$1,800 allotments from motor mileage tax paid by truck lines; \$640 from section 16 school fund, and \$45 for the teachers' institute.	
3. We collected for the state	212,571.31
which included \$185,000 from the sale of auto licenses; \$24,000 for use tax; \$2,500 for state old age insurance, and \$1,300 for old age pension tax.	
4. Income from welfare departments was	20,437.67
which included family payments for care of patients in state institutions, receipts from sales and care at the county home, relief refunded and orphans' home collections.	
5. Sale of bridge and road materials	9,451.72
6. Fine and forfeitures	9,310.20
7. Fees from county offices were	20,318.34
Clerk	\$8,646
Treasurer	5,788 *
Recorder	4,355
Sheriff	761
Auditor	529
Constable and Justices of the Peace	205
Coroner	35
* Included county's share of auto licenses; 50c on first registrations, 10c on renewals	
8. We collected for Blankville city	5,828.41
from special assessments (paving, sewer, sidewalks)	
9. Miscellaneous receipts were	5,196.57
10. Dog licenses brought in	3,382.80
11. Beer licenses brought in	1,375.00
(outside incorporated towns)	
12. Cigarette licenses brought in	1,250.00
(outside incorporated towns)	
13. Transfer from funds was	129,681.67

**EXAMPLE**

*Story on state university financial report; large figures broken down for the reader*

Three-fifths cents a day—or eighteen cents a month—is all that it cost the average citizen of this state to support Blankville University.

This figure is revealed in the annual financial report of the university issued today by Comptroller Harold E. Musterseed.

Covering the year which ended June 30—biggest in Blankville University history until the current year—the report to the citizens of the state also shows:

The plant of the university represents an investment, at cost of \$52,283,348, which means \$25.44 for each family in the state.

Of each dollar the state takes in as revenue, 6.2 cents goes to the university.

Of the university's total operating expenses, 45.1 cents of each dollar goes for direct cost of instruction; 13.2 cents for organized research, 9.2 cents for state-wide services, and the remaining 32.5 cents for library, plant, and administration expenses.

For every dollar a student pays in tuition and other fees, he receives instruction costing more than \$4.

The report's section on auxiliary enterprises reveals that the athletic program for the year, besides bringing the university a fistful of titles, was profitable to the tune of \$145,530. The Athletic Association took in \$642,946 during the year and spent \$497,416. With no indebtedness, its assets as of June 30 totaled \$556,775.

Other points brought out were:

Operating income of the university, from all sources, was \$31,007,827 during the year.

Enrollment reached 29,200 during the year, and to take care of these students, the university staff (faculty and nonfaculty) was increased by 801 persons to the full-time total of 3,500 persons.

The university provided scholarships, valued at \$211,566, for 2,100 students.

From the federal government the university received \$1,946,309 for research, and from private grants, \$767,487.

Most important and largest single gift ever received by the university was Cloverdale Park and farms, valued at \$3,500,000.

Endowment funds at Blankville University now total \$2,900,237,

and student loan funds, \$501,218. (The university said "it does not need additional student loan funds" and urged persons interested in making gifts "to consider scholarships and fellowship funds.")

## **102. Election Results**

If the average reader were interested in figures alone, you could publish page after page of election results on the day after the election and he would be happy. But he looks on an election as he does a football or baseball game. He wants the "game" statistics analyzed so that he can readily see why his favorites won or lost. So you give the election returns serious study and try to find answers to the following questions:

a. What are the names of the victorious candidates and how many votes did they receive?

b. How many precincts have reported and how many have not been heard from?

c. Who are the candidates whose election will not be decided until all precincts are heard from?

d. Was there a sweep for a particular party in the city, county, state, or nation?

e. What was the total number of votes cast? Was this a larger or smaller vote than in previous elections? Was it a record vote?

f. Which candidates, if any, were unopposed?

g. Did the defeated party strengthen or weaken its position? Did the victorious party appear stronger or weaker than in previous elections?

h. How did particular candidates fare in their home precinct, city, county, or state?

i. Does the election change the political complexion of the county building, city hall, state legislature, or national Congress?

j. What is the situation in regard to candidates who were re-elected? Did they receive more or fewer votes than in previous years?

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

k. Where returns are incomplete are the margins sizable enough to indicate who will win? If not, tell the reader: "Democratic candidates for the three places on the Blankville University board of trustees were leading at noon today. Their margins, however, were not sizable enough to make their election an absolute certainty."

l. Were there precincts in the county where the votes went 100 per cent Republican or Democratic?

m. Which races were the closest?

**Caution:** Do not say that one candidate has a "majority" of so many votes unless his total exceeds the combined votes of his opponents. Use the word "plurality" to indicate a candidate has more votes than his nearest rival, even though his margin of victory may be by one vote.

Elections are contests between persons, living, breathing personalities. Sober election statistics can be made alive and colorful just as are sports statistics if they are clothed with the human-interest elements of the contest. Tell your news in terms of the people who ran for public office. Was a particular candidate running for the first time? What about the old-timer who has been county judge for 24 years? Was he re-elected or defeated? What were the high lights of the election campaign? What were the major issues? How will the election results affect local government?

### EXAMPLES

*"County story" on the election; written for newspaper with "Democratic leanings"*

Sizable pluralities were recorded for all national and state Republican candidates, including Thomas E. Dewey and Gov. Dwight H. Green, in Blank County Tuesday.

The margin of victory, however, was less than county G.O.P. leaders had expected.

On the basis of the vote from 84 of the county's 85 precincts, as



available this morning, Dewey had rolled up 18,732 votes to President Roosevelt's 13,519, or a plurality of slightly over 5,000 votes.

Pre-election forecasts by bigwigs of the county Republican organization had been confidently set for a 6,000 to 7,000 plurality. The state central committee's handbook had set a 10,500 plurality for the county. The goal, however, was admittedly high.

Thus, the county Democratic organization, headed by Chairman Lardner O. Ring of Springdale, could take credit for a more active campaign than had been expected. This campaign apparently was effective in whittling down the G.O.P. pluralities.

Republicans, however, found some consolation in the fact that Dewey doubled the late Wendell L. Willkie's plurality of 2,751 over Roosevelt in the county in 1940.

High man on the G.O.P. ticket as far as Blank County was concerned was Governor Green whose 19,080 votes put him ahead of Presidential Nominee Dewey.

The Democratic gubernatorial nominee, State's Attorney Wilber J. Whistlebody of Jason County, got 12,501 votes, which gave Green a plurality of almost 7,000 as against 4,445 over Hickory M. Snout in Blank County in 1940.

As had been expected by many local Republican leaders, the G.O.P. senatorial nominee, Bertram Q. Lazram, of Suewanee, ran behind the rest of the state ticket in the county, getting 16,760 votes in the 84 reported precincts.

U.S. Senator Silver O. Beetle, Democratic nominee for re-election, who has had the chance to appear as benefactor for Blank County communities on a number of federal projects, led his ticket in the county with 13,626 votes, topping both Roosevelt and Whistlebody.

Beetle's forthright stand on international affairs, plus his demonstrated ability to be of service in obtaining federal largesse for such projects as the Blankville University airport, probably were the two factors which caused him to run the best race on the state ticket here.

Congressman-at-large Womack O. Lampliter was another Republican on the state ticket who lagged behind his colleagues in Blank County. His count was 16,578 votes to 13,370 for his Democratic opponent, Mrs. Martha Jones Smith.

Mrs. Smith, daughter of the late sculptor, Tallymo Jones, Blankville University alumnus and benefactor, had the benefit of an independent committee, including many faculty members, working in her behalf,

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

together with an apparent growing distrust of Lampliter's isolationist record.

Other Republicans on the state ticket carried the county by substantial pluralities, as shown in the following tabulation (84 to 85 precincts):

Lieutenant-Governor, Hymie X. Smallface (R), 18,395; Hunter F. Game (D), 11,493.

Secretary of State, Onus L. Tremblechin (R), 17,494; Oscar T. Puroline (D), 12,673.

Auditor of Public Accounts, Lincoln G. Tube (R), 18,277; Smathers Kelley (D), 11,484.

State Treasurer, Karlton K. Komics (R), 17,867; Earl G. Mosley (D), 11,818.

Attorney-General, King U. Kong (R), 17,350; Earl St. Swithin (D), 12,642.

President Roosevelt carried only 17 of the 84 reported precincts. They included precincts 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 16 in the city of Blankville township.

### *Same "County story" on the election; written for newspaper with "Republican leanings"*

Republican pluralities in Blank County today hit their highest peak since 1928 as complete returns from all but one of the 84 precincts gave leads of 6,442 to Governor Dwight H. Green and 4,930 to Thomas E. Dewey.

These Blank County pluralities exceeded by 2,000 votes the 1940 counts accorded Green and Wendell Willkie. The demonstration of Republican strength here—while President Roosevelt was carrying the state—was even more impressive because the total vote was 6,000 less than 1940.

Presidential figures indicated Blank County's total vote would be slightly more than 32,000 votes as compared with 38,000 in 1940.

Governor Green's vote appeal surprised even his most loyal supporters, as he rolled up an unofficial total of 18,851 to lead the Republican ticket in Blank County. His Democratic opponent, Wilber J. Whistlebody, trailed his running mates, and accumulated 12,501 votes here. One precinct—the second in Springdale—was still missing.

Green was beaten in only nine Blank County precincts—all tradition-

ally Democratic strongholds—and tied in three more Roosevelt-carried precincts.

Strong Democratic efforts for Senator Silver O. Beetle paid dividends in Blank County to the extent that he polled a few hundred more votes than Roosevelt. His Republican opponent, Theodore S. Stump, was ahead in the county, however, by 2,684 votes.

Mrs. Martha Jones Smith, for whom a local committee of "independents" worked hard, ran behind Beetle in her race for congress-at-large. With one precinct still missing, her opponent, Congressman Womack O. Lampliter, had a 3,001 lead in the county.

In terms of pluralities, Senator Paul Y. Bird, the Springdale senator, was the Blank County champ. The county gave Bird a lead of 6,808 votes over Caswell O. Wrigley, Coon Hollow Democrat, whom he defeated easily throughout the district.

If the canvass substantiates unofficial tabulations, the largest local plurality for state candidates went to State Auditor Lincoln G. Tube—due chiefly to his Democratic opponent, Smathers Kelley, running behind other Democratic candidates.

Earl St. Swithin, former Blankville University counsel, failed to carry Blank County in his Democratic bid for Attorney General. He did succeed in holding down incumbent King U. Kong's plurality to one of the smallest. The 84 precincts gave Kong a lead of 2,693 over St. Swithin.

Repercussions of his bitter primary contest with Leopold Stumskie were credited with cutting down the plurality here of Onus L. Tremblechin, Republican candidate for Secretary of State, to 4,777. Many Republicans blamed the primary situation for Tremblechin's defeat in the state.

For other Republican incumbents seeking re-election, votes were only expressions of confidence since they had no opposition. Those men who went into the election without worries included State's Attorney Anton I. Boomer, Recorder Jake P. Toothy, and Doctor Wilber U. Sent, county coroner.

### **103. Taxes and Tax Levies**

The reporter who turns out understandable copy on taxes must himself understand what is meant by the terms "tax levy," "tax rate," and "assessed valuation." The tax levy is the amount of

money to be raised by taxation. For example, if the Blank school district needs \$20,000 to run it next year, and the district expects to take in \$4,000 in tuition and interest on investments, the remaining \$16,000 will have to be raised by taxes. The Blank school district tax levy in this case is \$16,000.

Collection of the \$16,000 so that the amount is divided equally and fairly among the citizens of the school district is the problem of the tax assessor and the tax collector or auditor. In most counties the assessor lists personal property every year and real estate every four years. From these lists comes the "assessed valuation" of the county. The assessed valuation is figured by taking a certain percentage of the actual or real value of the property listed. If the actual value of all personal property and real estate in the county is 6 million dollars, the assessed valuation might be set at \$3,600,000, or 60 per cent of the actual value. Suppose that of this \$3,600,000 assessed valuation for Blank County the Blank school district assessed valuation is \$400,000. The district needs \$16,000 to run the schools next year and the assessed valuation of the district is \$400,000. The tax rate each person must pay is obtained by dividing the \$16,000 by the assessed valuation. The resulting decimal fraction—.04—becomes 40 mills so that the tax rate can be stated in mills. A mill is one tenth of a cent. A tax of one mill would mean 10 cents in taxes on every \$100 of assessed valuation. A tax of 40 mills would mean \$4 in taxes on every \$100 of assessed valuation or \$40 in taxes on every \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Now that you understand how taxes "get that way," you can tell your readers about it. That's what a reporter for the Champaign-Urbana *Courier* did in the following story:

Taxes—why they exist and what they do—excite more than an academic interest right now among members of the John Taxpayer family, Champaign County, since the mailman has just slipped a bill for \$3,657,438.40 into the mailbox.

Here, sans the epithets that usually accompany most talk about taxes, is the simple how and why of those bills:

Since the property is the basis for most taxes, the picture begins there. Each year assessors move through the townships placing values on personal property. That process is going on right now and must be completed by June 1 to fit in with the other pieces of the picture which by that time will be starting to take shape.

Once every four years the assessors also list values for real estate. Last year was such a quadrennial year. Since holdings of real estate change less rapidly than ownership of items like automobiles and furniture the valuations of real property are changed only every four years.

In this county the assessors are under the direction of the county treasurer who instructs them in appraising procedures before they start out. By meeting with all 30 township assessors at the same time the treasurer thus seeks to assure the same range of valuations all over the county.

Sometimes property owners object to the values set down for their properties and appeal to the board of review which hears complaints from such persons all over the county. The board members have the power to alter those assessments which they feel are unfair, thus furthering the leveling process and acting as a check on the assessors. The three-man board begins the hearings about July 1 and completes the work late in the fall.

Meanwhile, each taxing body has been making up its budget to decide how much will be needed to operate during the next fiscal year. In most cases the taxing units can adopt their appropriation ordinances and tax levies only after publishing them and holding public hearings. It is here that the taxpayer has his chance to protest if he feels the officials are planning to spend too much and make his taxes unnecessarily high.

After the Board has completed its readjustments of tax assessments and the tax levies have come in from the approximately 300 taxing bodies the county clerk begins "extending" taxes.

First, the county clerk's deputies adjust the assessments of all properties by using a multiplier supplied by the state department of revenue. This is done to level values in this county with those of other counties.

Then the deputies classify the properties geographically as they fall within the various taxing districts. They have to determine whether

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

a 160-acre farm, for example, lies inside or outside a certain school or fire protection district. Sometimes the boundaries run through a farm. Then the deputies have to show what buildings on fields lie inside the district concerned and make sure that only taxable items inside pay taxes to that district.

After the properties are distributed in this fashion in both rural and urban areas the deputies must arrive at perhaps the most mysterious part about taxes, the tax rate.

The deputies determine the tax rate for each district by dividing the tax levy (the amount asked for) by the total valuation of property in the district. If the resulting rate is higher than that allowed by law for that district the deputies cut the levy back to the statutory limit.

After the rates are determined the county clerk and his deputies multiply each property owner's total valuation in each district by the proper rate, arriving at his total tax bill.

This process consumes the winter months and then the books go to the county treasurer who prepares the bills for mailing to the taxpayer.

By the time the bills go into the mail from the treasurer's office more than a year has rolled around since the assessor began his duties. In fact, he already is at work on the next year's taxes.

When the taxpayers start paying their bills the county treasurer makes a distribution of the funds among the various taxing bodies. The money is distributed somewhat in the following fashion:

In Champaign-Urbana from 52 to 54 cents of every tax dollar go to the schools and from 19 to 23 cents go for the city's operation. Eight cents go to the county and from four to six cents for the township. Streets and bridges take about three cents, the sanitary district about four cents, the public health district two cents and the parks from one cent (in Champaign) to four cents in Urbana.

The typical rural tax dollar is broken up something like this: 28 cents to the high school district, 19 cents to the common school, 24 cents to the village boards, 10 cents for the county, eight cents for permanent roads, six cents for the road and bridge fund and five cents for the township.

If a taxpayer fails to pay his taxes the treasurer asks the state's attorney to take the matter to the county court to ask judgment so that the property can be sold for taxes. This applies to both real estate and personal property.

Beef about taxes? You're too late this year, brother! The only time to check taxes and the only way to do it is to look in now and then

on the meetings of the men who spend the tax money and write the budgets, particularly at their annual public hearings.

Story possibilities on taxes and tax levies arise all during the year. Some of them may be listed:

*a. Tax income.* Payments to cities and villages in each county by the county treasurer. These monies are the cities' share of taxes collected by the county. The reporter can get stories all during the year as these payments are made. He can compare the payments with the same period last year, showing how tax collections have dropped off or have increased.

*b. Tax levy.* Tell your reader what the total tax levy will be. Tell him where the money will go—break the levy down so that he can tell at a glance how much of the levy is for schools, roads and bridges, police and fire protection, and salaries. Tell your reader what other monies will be available for running the government besides the tax monies. Compare the levy with other years. Explain why the levy is high or low.

*c. Tax payment deadline.* The deadline date is most important. Tell your reader the latest date on which he may pay his taxes. Tell him what the penalty will be if he does not pay on or before that date. Tell your reader how payments are coming in. Are the taxpayers slower in meeting their tax obligations this year than last?

*d. Tax rate.* What is the rate and how was it figured? Is the rate higher or lower than last year? How does it compare with other comparable governmental units? Is the rate expressed in mills or cents? (Some county auditors publicize the tax rate in cents for easier understanding. For example, a rate of 40 cents means 40 cents on each \$100 of assessed valuation. Expressed in mills the same rate would be 4 mills.)

*e. Special levies or assessments.* When special monies are needed the county governing body may be authorized to set up a special levy—the sum of money needed—and issue bonds to

obtain the money. Authorization for a special levy oftentimes must come from the county judge. The news story on a special levy should explain why the levy is necessary, how the money will be obtained, why the regular levy will not take care of the need, and who approved the levy.

*f. Tax refund.* Has high reader interest because the pocket-book of the reader may be touched. Tell him how much the refund will be, who gets it, and when he will get it. Tell him the "why" of the refund. In the case of income tax refund if big named persons are involved, tell who they are and how much money they received.

*g. Elections concerning change in tax levy.* Tell the voter what the election means to him. Explain why the tax levy change is necessary.

*h. Assessed valuation.* What is the valuation and how was it figured? How does it compare with last year? How does it compare with other comparable governmental units? What was the personal property assessment? Were the real estate assessments changed this year? How many automobiles and trucks were listed in the county? How many cattle and other livestock were listed? Was there any change in the amount of improved land?

For example:

Approximately 40 per cent of the motor vehicles licensed from Blank County in 1947 were not listed for assessment for local taxes, according to a study of figures made Saturday.

The recently issued report by Secretary of State Wash I. Willow on motor vehicle license registrations for last year shows 21,390 passenger cars in Blank County.

However, figures in the county treasurer's office show that the township tax assessors uncovered and listed for assessment only 13,594 autos last year. Four of the assessors who were available for comment today refused to talk about the discrepancy.

Likewise, Willow's office licensed from Blank County 3,972 trucks and buses, but the tax assessors turned in only 2,781 such vehicles.



The situation prevailing here is not unusual in the state. A recent study made in Skunk County, where Metropolis is located, showed the same discrepancy to exist.

Blankville university-owned automobiles, while licensed by the state, would not be subject to local tax assessment, but this would account for a difference of only a few hundred vehicles.

The secretary of state's office licensed 26,806 vehicles in the county last year, including 21,390 passenger cars, 3,972 trucks and buses, 876 trailers and semi-trailers, 79 dealer and in-transit licenses, and 489 motorcycles.

Placing of all of the unlisted autos, trucks, and buses on the tax books probably would yield local governmental agencies a good many thousands of dollars more in tax income.

Based on assessment at one fifth of full fair cash value, the 13,594 passenger cars located by the assessors and their deputies were valued at \$1,348,880, and the 2,781 trucks and buses (also computed on a one fifth of full value system) at \$308,370.

*i. Complaints on assessments.* Are they increasing or decreasing? When will the work of the board of review (board of equalization) be completed?

*j. Income tax.* Federal and state income tax systems, however much they have been simplified in the last few years, are complicated to your readers. Any changes in the systems make news and should be carefully explained in as nontechnical language as possible. The following story from the Champaign-Urbana (Ill.) *News-Gazette* explains the reader's stake in a federal income tax law change:

All salaried workers in the United States are getting a "pay raise" Saturday.

Here's what we mean:

You and most of the rest of the adult citizens elect the congressmen. These representatives, recently heeding the public clamor for some tax relief, passed a new tax law that reduces personal income tax rates.

This will cut your tax bill due Uncle Sam next year, providing your wage or salary rate remains the same. And since your employer extracts a certain amount from your pay check regularly as a "withhold-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

ing" tax which he turns over to the federal government, the amount withheld will be reduced some beginning May 1.

### HERE'S WHY

Here's why:

The withholding portion taken from wages paid before May 1 is figured at the old rates, but the reduced tax rate applies to all your 1948 wages or income. This means that in most cases (if your exemptions don't change) more than was necessary was withdrawn from January 1 to May 1. These amounts withheld from your pay—remember—are actually only partial payments against your 1948 income tax.

When you file your 1948 return (not later than March 15, 1949) the total amount withheld during 1948 will be subtracted from the amount your return shows you owe Uncle Sam. If the amount withheld is less than the tax, you must pay the difference. If it is more, the government will send you a check for the difference.

Thus, it is quite possible you will get some money back next spring. If the economy remains the way it is, or balloons some more, you'll probably find a place to use it.

### BIGGER CASH "KITTY"

But regardless, beginning May 1 the amount withheld from your wages will be reduced in conformity with the new income tax table.

Thus, in effect, you have voted yourself a pay raise—because the few extra dollars every pay period, in most cases, add just that much to your cash "kitty" for spending purposes.

Here are a few other points to keep in mind about the May 1 change:

Your employer is given the choice of figuring the tax by using the official government tables or by a percentage method. Don't worry about which he chooses. It works out the same for you.

You will continue to get a receipt (form W-2) at the end of the year for the total amount withheld from your wages—just as you have since the withholding tax plan was put into effect on January 1, 1943.

You will get the "pay raise" beginning Saturday without having to file any more forms yourself, UNLESS your exemptions decrease. If your exemptions are less, you must fill out a revised form W-4.

These things may change your exemption status:

The new law provides a double exemption to persons who are 65

or older, or blind. You can claim this exemption now if you will be 65 at any time before January 1, 1949.

### **“TAKE HOME” PAY GOES UP**

If a person you previously had claimed as a dependent no longer is a dependent.

If your exemptions are increased—like with a new baby in the family—you may file a new withholding certificate. In case of an increase it is not mandatory.

Remember that the change has nothing to do with the amount your employer deducts from your pay check for social security purposes (deductions that begin January 1, 1937). The May 1 revision applies only to the pay-as-you-earn system of “withholding” for income tax purposes.

It adds up to this:

Your “take home” pay is going to be a little higher, beginning Saturday.

And the tax bill you pay next spring will be less, if your income rate and exemptions remain static.

This is encouraging. You may feel like slipping a few extra dollars to the “little woman” for a new hat. Or go shopping for that new tricycle or skates Junior has been teasing you for.

Happy May Day!

## **104. Business Reports**

News of business must be squeezed from business statistics. These statistics come to the reporter in the “raw” in the form of company reports, market quotations, articles in business journals, bank statements, reports from chambers of commerce, reports from local, state, and national governmental agencies, and reports of private agencies specializing in data showing business conditions.

### **COMPANY REPORTS**

These reports are usually issued annually at the end of the firm’s fiscal year. They vary in format from elaborate printed

booklets to a few mimeographed pages. The reporter should read company reports with two things in mind, the interests of general readers and the interests of special groups in his community. If his is a farming community and the report indicates increased payments for farm products, that point should be emphasized. Reports that reveal changes in costs of products, expansion of industry, and increases or decreases in passenger and freight rates are of general interest. Emphasis on these items help explain large figures and makes them live for the reader. Coverage of the following items is suggested:

a. The company's net profit for the year compared with previous years.

b. Indications of expansion of company activities for the next year.

c. Additions to plant, property, and equipment during the past year.

d. New products that were introduced during the past year and statements about new products to be put on the market next year.

e. Change in sales prices.

f. Hiring and firing record of the company; total number of employees on the company pay roll; changes in wages and salaries.

g. Volume of business compared with previous years.

h. Taxes paid by the company, particularly those which filter down to local government.

i. Dividends paid to stockholders.

j. Shortages affecting the pocketbook or convenience of the public. For example, "The shortage of hotel accommodations in most large cities is likely to continue this year, Barney O. Scarce, president of the Comfort Hotels Corporation, said yesterday in his corporation's first annual report."

k. Problems faced by the company in serving the public.

The reporter handling financial reports of various industries

should have an understanding of their accounting systems. If he does not understand them he should discuss the reports with someone who does. With one interpretation of the financial statement the reporter can make his reader believe that the company made an enormous profit. With another interpretation he can make the profit appear small. What he wants to do—to be fair to all concerned—is tell the true story of the American profit system. *Editor & Publisher* discussed this problem in an editorial entitled, "Financial Stories," which appeared in the Nov. 8, 1947, issue of the magazine. The writer said:

Newspapers inadvertently add grist to the mill of left-wing critics of our profit system. Financial stories often play up record dividend or net profit figures without picturing them in relation to total sales, total payroll or any other figure that might portray them in their true perspective. Thus, a public misconception of exorbitant profits is created with its resultant criticism of the profit system.

Newspaper editorials frequently point out the necessity for educating the public to a better understanding of the relationship of profits and wages. They can do part of the job by clarifying their financial stories.

The reporter must not allow his desire to squeeze something big out of a financial statement get the better of his sense of fairness. A figure denoting a big profit may not always be the most accurate figure. On the other hand, the company may deliberately figure its profits so that they appear small. One way of doing this is to indicate profits by the dollar-sales yardstick. That means figuring profits as so many cents on each dollar of sales. Labor leaders believe this method of denoting profits is inaccurate. They want industries to figure their profits by relating them to their investment. This method gives a picture of the return on each dollar invested, they say.

The reporter should dig around and study the situation until he is satisfied that his story reveals the truest picture of the financial condition of the company. If he is in doubt, let him

figure profits more than one way and tell his reader what his figures mean.

### EXAMPLE

*Oil company report; writer uses report to show oil situation in the U.S.*

Problems of the oil industry in coping with unprecedented increases in consumer demand for its products are reflected in the 1947 annual report of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana now being distributed to stockholders.

Despite the expenditure of \$220,000,000 last year by this company and its subsidiaries for new wells, pipe lines, refinery units, and other facilities needed to provide more oil and gasoline, demand continues to far exceed the supply.

The industry is doing its utmost to catch up with phenomenal demands but it will be several years before this is accomplished, A. W. Peake, President of Standard, told a press conference. Meanwhile, extraordinary factors such as the strike of the coal miners may further increase demand.

Indication of the skyrocketing use of oil and oil products is provided by contrasting the peacetime years of 1937 and 1947. In the former year, demand was 1,180,600,000 barrels, while last year the estimated demand was 2,020,000,000 barrels.

According to the American Petroleum Institute, daily crude oil production in the United States has recently been running at about 5,350,000 barrels. Average daily production for the four weeks ended March 6 was 5,357,350 barrels. If the latter average were to prevail throughout the leap year 1948 (wells produce every day in the year), production would be 1,960,770,100 barrels—59,229,900 barrels under the estimated demand for 1947.

Standard of Indiana executives expect increased crude production from their own companies' wells in 12 states this year. Average daily production for 1948 is estimated at 222,000 barrels, in contrast to an actual average of 196,000 barrels in 1947.

Dr. Robert E. Wilson, Chairman of the Board of Standard, and Mr. Peake agree that no consumer likes advancing prices, but they contend that adequate prices are the consumer's best insurance against future shortages and privations. Prices directly affect the company's earnings and good earnings are essential to help finance heavy expend-

itures needed to meet the rapidly growing demand, Dr. Wilson and Mr. Peake say.

According to Standard, petroleum product prices at the close of 1947—a year in which there were several increases—were only 112 per cent of what they were in 1926, compared with an average of 163 per cent for all commodities.

“Oil prices were unduly low throughout the whole period 1927-1941, mainly because potential supply was somewhat in excess of demand,” Standard says. “These low prices were perpetuated by the Office of Price Administration during and after the war. This had the double effect of discouraging oil discovery and the expansion of facilities and of stimulating many home owners to switch to oil from other fuels. Low heating oil prices thus helped create our present supply problems.”

Price increases in 1947 helped Standard reach a new high of \$94,-880,715 in earnings. According to company executives, however, it was necessary to use approximately 68 per cent of these earnings, in addition to \$96,000,000 in borrowed funds and \$60,000,000 provided by charges for depreciation and depletion, to provide the amount invested in new facilities during the year. They said recent earnings are on a much increased investment, are measured in dollars of much lower buying power, and represent a smaller percentage of the sales dollar than in previous periods of national prosperity.

Most expansion must come from plowed-back earnings, although funds can be borrowed to a limited extent, Mr. Peake said. He added that it is not fair to stockholders to sell capital stock, as has been suggested.

Little is being done toward expanding Standard's marketing facilities, Dr. Wilson said. Presumably such expansion will be resumed when supplies of petroleum products more nearly meet demand.

Pipe lines operated by Standard of Indiana and its subsidiaries carried a traffic of 96,678,000 barrel miles in 1947 as compared with 81,590,000 in 1946. It is expected the figure for 1948 will be much higher. Crude oil moves through the pipe lines at a speed of from one and one half to four miles an hour.

Entering into the world oil picture is the increasing attention being given by producers and industrial consumers to oil obtained from oil shale, coal, and natural gas. Experiments are being conducted and estimates of petroleum reserves are not as compelling in the light of these advances as they were before coal, gas, and shale began to be

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

utilized for oil. Petroleum reserves of Standard increased in 1947, however, according to Mr. Peake. The amount or percentage of increase is confidential.

In 1946, the last year of record, American oil companies produced 78.4 per cent of the world's petroleum, excluding Russia. Indication of the increased demand in the United States is provided by API statistics which show that sales of gasoline increased 7.3 per cent in 1947 over 1946; kerosene 13.1; distillate fuels 18.8; residual fuels 8.1; other fuels 13; and all oils 10.3. It is estimated that demand for gasoline in the United States will be up 5.9 per cent this year over 1947.

*—Christian Science Monitor*

### MARKETS

News of commodity and security market transactions is usually presented in tabular form along with an explanation of the transactions. Readers can tell from the tabulated matter whether the stocks went up or down or remained steady. But they want more than the bare statistics. They want to know why certain stocks went up while others declined. They want to know what the changes mean in their own communities, what effect they have upon business in general. Your readers developed an interest in the stock market after the 1929 crash. That interest has been kept alive by postwar rumors of depression ahead, shortages, new production, new products that came out of the war, and the shifting price level. The interest is there. Your responsibility is to tap that interest by presenting the reader with interesting, readable news of market activities.

If you are covering a local market (livestock, tobacco, or farmer's market), tell your reader about high lights of the day's trading. He will be interested in the volume of business carried on by the market and which grades of tobacco or breed of cattle brought the top prices. Tell your reader about the following:

a. General buying activity. Volume of business transacted compared with previous days, months, or same period last year. Were sales heavy or light?



b. Which products brought top prices? Which firms or individuals were the heaviest buyers or sellers?

c. How did the local market compare with other markets in the area? How did the prices compare?

d. What was the cause of reduced buying or increased buying? Was market activity affected by weather, strikes, government orders, surpluses, shortages, or other factors?

e. Effect of market activity on local business conditions, price levels, and employment?

If you don't know the answers to many of these questions, find out who does and get him to make a statement.

**Caution:** Don't make predictions concerning market activity. Don't write market news in such a way that readers take your news stories as "tips." Neither the reporter nor the newspaper should be in the position of recommending stocks or commodities to their readers.

#### EXAMPLE

*"Roundup" story of commodity prices; reporter tells his readers what market transactions mean to them*

CHICAGO, Feb. 24—(AP)—New record prices for pork-on-the-hoof today highlighted an upward surge in prices that spread throughout the nation's commodity markets.

With supplies of porkers at livestock markets running unusually low, quotations shot up in spectacular fashion. At Chicago a top of \$29 a hundred pounds was paid.

Participating in the broad advance, in addition to hogs and other meat animals, were grain, cotton, eggs, and silver.

Grain for future delivery on the Chicago Board of Trade spurted in an active market. All wheat contracts sold above \$2 a bushel. Winter wheat now in the ground was bringing the highest price on record at Chicago for mid-winter.

In New York cotton for future delivery closed \$2.75 to \$3.40 a bale higher after spurring more than \$4 a bale during the session. Cotton at New Orleans finished \$2.75 to \$3.40 a bale higher.

Sales of foreign silver in New York were made at 74½¢ an ounce

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

or  $\frac{1}{2}$ c above the "official" price. On Friday foreign silver at New York brought 71c.

October egg futures at Chicago advanced to a new seasonal high at 53.35 cents a dozen. Flax at Minneapolis sold at \$8 a bushel, a record high and up 25 cents from Friday. Rye was quoted at a record high of \$3.26 to \$3.27 a bushel at Omaha.

Russ Jeter, pork market specialist for the Agriculture Department, said the jump in live hog and wholesale pork prices may result in pork chops as high as \$1 a pound in retail butcher shops.

A scarcity of hogs in the country, plus the strong consumer demand for all types of meat, was offered by livestock experts as part explanation for soaring prices.

Marvin Henning of the Agriculture Department said the decline in hog receipts had been expected, but that "it appears to be a little more acute than generally expected."

Another spokesman of the Agriculture Department said that about 80 per cent of last spring's pig crop had already been marketed, farmers having rushed many unfinished hogs to market following lifting of OPA controls. He added that a continuing small run is in prospect for the next few months.

One reason for the scarcity is that last spring's production was comparatively small, authorities said, and last fall's pigs haven't enough weight yet for the market. Weather conditions were not mentioned by any sources as possible factors.

Hog receipts at twelve principal livestock markets today totaled only 34,700 head compared with 64,200 head a year ago.

### **BUSINESS JOURNALS**

Business reporters should be familiar with the outstanding trade journals in important industrial fields. These magazines provide him with many interesting facts and figures which he can use as background to help explain business conditions or re-write as straight news. The *Oil & Gas Journal*, *Steel*, and *Printer's Ink* are good examples of the kinds of journals the reporter can use.

### EXAMPLE

Uncertainty over the trend of steel prices prevails despite assurances of leading industry executives that no general advance is contemplated, the magazine *Steel* reported.

"Inflationary forces still are pressing steel production costs upward," the trade journal said. "Further, wage negotiations are just ahead. In these circumstances consumers are skeptical of price stability, and such skepticism is bound to prevail until the wage issue has been disposed of."

The magazine reported a confused steel price picture.

"Actually a variety of prices prevail," *Steel* said. "For example, all producers did not advance semifinished and structural shapes recently, some continuing to quote as formerly. Major producers have not revised prices on sheets and strip but several smaller mills have announced advances up to \$10 per ton. Then, of course, another set of prices applies in negotiated deals involving ingot conversion tonnage, and, still further blurring the picture, are a multiplicity of prices quoted in the gray market."

Steelmaking operations increased last week to the highest level since January, the estimated national ingot rate advancing one point to 94.5 per cent. The figure is equivalent to output of about 1,705,000 tons of ingots.

—Associated Press

### BANK STATEMENTS

The annual financial statements of local banking institutions are good yardsticks of the business of the community and provide interesting news when they are properly examined. The reader will probably be interested in knowing

- a. The total deposits of all banks in the community as compared with deposits in previous years.
- b. The total amount of money loaned by all banks indicates how well the banks are meeting the needs of expanding industry.
- c. The total resources of the banks compared with previous years.
- d. The ratio of loans to deposits compared with the ratio of previous years. If there was one loan for every four deposits last

year and only one loan for every eight deposits this year, the banks should have on hand more cash and capital wealth this year than last.

e. The total investments in government bonds.

f. Total checks drawn on local banks during the year compared with previous years. Check debits are a good barometer of the amount of business in retail and commercial circles.

### EXAMPLE

#### *Story summarizing the annual statements of all local banks*

Total deposits in Blankville banks at the close of 1947 amounted to \$56,406,399.92, easily establishing a new record total of deposits and reflecting the community's growth and prosperity.

As computed Tuesday from statements of the six local banks, prepared for official publication notices, the total year-end deposits figure is especially significant in comparison with past years:

Deposits in the six banks are nearly four and one half times as large as total deposits at the end of 1937 in the five banks then serving the community.

They are almost two and one half times larger than the total five years ago—as of December 31, 1942.

They represent a gain of nearly \$3,900,000 over the total deposits one year ago.

Composite figures, on deposits, for these periods, are:

End of 1947—\$56,403,744.92 (six banks).

End of 1946—\$52,517,503.41 (six banks).

End of 1942—\$23,996,287.39 (five banks).

End of 1937—\$12,906,050.65 (five banks).

Similarly, the latest statements detailing the banks' resources and liabilities as of the close of business December 31, 1947, showed significant gains in resources and in loans and discounts.

Total resources of the six banks attained a new high of \$58,821,695.54, compared to a little more than 25 millions at the end of 1942 and 14 millions as of a decade ago.

Loans, which evidence the part local banks play in helping meet needs of local mercantile and industrial interests, as well as the individual borrower, totaled \$6,872,382.37. This is a million and a half more

than the loans and discounts total a year ago; about three and one half millions over five years ago and about 3.8 millions over ten years ago.

On a composite basis—totals from the six banks—the ratio of loans to deposits has declined some, particularly in comparison with 1937 figures. Currently, the aggregate ratio of loans to deposits is about one to eight; in 1937, it was about one to four.

This evidences to a large extent the greater amount of cash and capital wealth in Blankville, with the resultant lesser demands, proportionately, for loans.

The year-end statements showed that all of the local banks have enjoyed a marked growth in deposits and total resources.

An interesting feature of the year-end reports, from the investments portfolio angle, is the steady increase over the years in government bond holdings. During the war years, particularly after 1942, investments in government obligations increased greatly in the local banks, as was the case with banks all over the country.

Currently, the local banks list a total of \$32,150,615.40 in government obligations, direct and guaranteed, comprising a substantial part of their total assets. Five years ago the investment portfolios in the five banks had a total of about 6.5 millions in government obligations; and in 1937, a little less than 2.4 millions.

As reported by the Federal Reserve district, checks drawn on the six local banks totaled \$46,135,000 in October and \$37,279,000 in November. December figures have not been received as yet. Check debits for the first 11 months aggregated almost 370 million dollars.

In 1937, check debits for the entire year in Blankville totaled a little less than 160 million dollars.

Check debits are considered one of the prime indexes of commercial activity, and the tremendous increase in 10 years, like the heavy increase of deposits in local banks, reflects both the growth in population and the increased prosperity of the community.

#### **REPORTS FROM CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**

The local chamber of commerce is the best day-to-day source for business news in your community. Weekly and monthly statistical reports compiled by chamber of commerce officials provide you with information on all business activity of the

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

community. By comparing the reports, month by month you can indicate whether business is booming in the community or is lagging behind the same period a year ago.

### **EXAMPLE**

*Story written from the Blankville C. of C. monthly business statistical review*

Probably because of the coal strike, Blankville's industrial pay roll went on the downslide during November, according to the monthly business statistical review issued today by the Chamber of Commerce.

The industrial pay roll in the month aggregated \$234,528 compared with \$266,215 in October. Number of persons employed in industries was 1,306 and the average weekly pay check was \$40.12. In October the number of workers was 1,402 and the average weekly wage was \$43.23.

Pay roll of Blankville University was \$906,261 with 5,492 persons carried on the staff. Jasper Field reported 1,353 civilian employees in November, a big drop from the figure of 1,949 for October, but accounted for by the large-scale army economy program now under way.

The State Employment Service office received 677 applications for jobs in the month, and made 111 placements compared with 163 placements a month earlier.

Bank debits were \$33,114,000 as against \$45,350,000 in October of 1946 and \$30,690,000 in November of 1945. Postal receipts were down sharply to \$38,277 from \$47,022 for October, but higher than the figure of \$33,990 for November of 1945.

Railroad car loadings outbound totaled 518, a sharp upward jump from 194 for October. Inbound car loadings were 885 compared with 1,316 in October. Real estate transfers were 296 as against 346 a month before.

Number of telephones in service rose to 10,679, a gain of almost 200 in the month. State Water Service Co. pumped 114,175,000 gallons of water in November.

### **GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES**

Considerable material of general reader interest is available in reports of government agencies that deal with business statistics.

The monthly crop reports of the Agriculture Department indicate expected production of particular foods. Your lead, for example, might read: "The Agriculture Department reported that near-record production of citrus fruits still is in prospect for the current season." Weekly reports from the Federal Reserve Board show the trend of business loans at member banks throughout the nation. The Board also reports such things as department store sales in the major cities of the Federal Reserve districts. From the Commerce Department come reports showing the nation's exports and imports each month. This department also reports such things as consumer incomes each month, manufacturers' sales, and wholesale grocers' stock of goods on hand for the month. Wholesale prices are reported weekly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

These are just a few of the reports of business conditions that are produced by government agencies. You handle all of them in about the same manner, however. Look for material of general interest and try to indicate trends. Compare the reports with previous periods. Indicate any seasonal aspect. If the report covers a pre-Easter week, do sales and prices compare favorably with the same week last year? Look for local angles.

#### EXAMPLE

Consumer incomes rose in January to hit a record high annual rate of \$210,820,000,000, the Commerce Department has announced.

The figure for December was \$210,400,000,000. The January rate was 7 per cent higher than the 1947 average of \$196,800,000,000.

January's increase over December came despite a slight downturn in wage and salary payments, biggest single source of personal incomes.

The department attributed the wage-salary drop to a decline in employment and a shorter work week in durable goods manufacturing, along with more than a seasonal drop in building employment due to bad weather.

The general increase in consumer income during January was attributed to:

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

1. Increased income from abroad due to higher prices. This was just before the early February break in market prices for farm commodities, which should be reflected in the February income report.

2. A gain in employment insurance payments, which the department said "more than offset" the small wage-salary decline.

3. Higher bonus payments to veterans as New York state began its payments on a bonus expected to total about \$400,000,000.

Also counted in consumer income are net incomes of business owners and partnerships, dividends and interest, and net rents received by landlords.

### **BUSINESS STATISTICS FROM PRIVATE AGENCIES**

*Ward's Automotive Reports*, the American Iron and Steel Institute, the Association of American Railroads, the Textile Economics Bureau, Dun & Bradstreet, and the National Industrial Conferences Board are a few of the many private agencies supplying business statistics for newspaper use. The following are sample leads written from such reports:

#### *Auto Production*

Motorcar production in the United States last week will total 109,082 units, *Ward's Automotive Reports* estimated. With Canada's output the week's total will come to 114,888, the agency said.

#### *Steel Output*

February steel production set a new peacetime record for the month and topped February, 1947, by more than 500,000 tons, the American Iron and Steel Institute said.

#### *Freight Loadings*

The Association of American Railroads reported that 792,571 cars of revenue freight were loaded during the week ended last Saturday.

#### *Rayon Shipments*

Domestic shipments of rayon in February declined to 80,600,000 pounds from 90,200,000 in January, *Rayon Organon*, the bulletin of the Textile Economics Bureau, reported.



### ***Business Failures***

Commercial and industrial failures in the week ended March 4 were second highest in any week since early 1943, Dun & Bradstreet reported.

### ***Price Index***

The National Industrial Conference Board announced its consumers' price index reached a new high in mid-January.

## **105. Weather Data**

People like to read weather statistics because they like to talk about the weather. They like to compare notes with their neighbors and argue about which was the coldest or hottest day of the year. But just because reader interest already exists in weather data is no excuse for the reporter to forget the rules of readability. He need not assume his readers will struggle through his dry facts, technical phrases, and long words just because they want to know what the weather added up to last month. There is no excuse for a weather story that reads like the following:

February's precipitation report of .16 inches is the lowest ever recorded for any month by George W. Weathervane, Blankville University weatherman, since he assumed his post in 1920. Reporting Wednesday morning on the lack of precipitation for the 28 days, he explained that on a number of days a trace of precipitation was recorded, but not enough actually to measure.

There were six days upon which at least .01 inches of precipitation was recorded. And there were 12 cloudy, three partly cloudy and 13 clear days. Snowfall measured 2.5 inches, but Weathervane reports it was "dry snow." The greatest precipitation report of any 24-hour period was .08 inches on February 6.

Temperatures ranged from 55 degrees on February 14 to one degree below zero on February 8. The mean temperature was 32.8 degrees. The average maximum-minimum was 32.4 degrees, and the mean maximum 32.1; mean minimum 16.2.

Prevailing winds were from the north with 4,239 miles of wind

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

movement during the month. This was an average of 169 miles per day or 7.04 miles per hour. The highest reduced barometer was 30.46 at 2 P.M., February 2, and the lowest reduced barometer was 29.41 at 2 P.M., February 6.

Many readers are confused by the term "precipitation." They interpret it to mean rainfall only, but the United States Weather Bureau has expanded the term to take in snow, hail, sleet, and mist, as well as rain. Most persons reading the above weather story would miss the full meaning of the phrases "average maximum-minimum" and "mean maximum." Also the term "reduced barometer" has little meaning for the average reader. The reporter used these terms because they were given to him that way by the weatherman. In such stories the first duty of the reporter is to explain his terms or find substitutes for them that can be understood easily.

In the weather story your reader will want to know

- a. How all phases of the weather compared with other days, weeks, months, or years, according to the period covered by the data you have.
- b. Were there any records broken?
- c. Any freak aspects of the weather during the period?

Often weather statistics can be the basis of interpretative stories that reveal how the weather has affected or will affect business, agricultural, recreation, construction, and health conditions in the community.

### EXAMPLES

*Weather news tied up with reader's plans; statistics inserted painlessly*

The weather man, who sees no reason to change the combination, was happy to report today that he thinks St. Louis's weather is going to continue in the abnormal but delightful groove it got into when autumn arrived last Wednesday.

Weekend outers will enjoy sunny skies and cool temperatures, Meteorologist Harry F. Wahlgren predicted. High tomorrow, he thinks,

will be in the low 79s after a low in the morning of about 52. High temperature in the city was a 5-degree sub-normal 72, and the low this morning was 53 at 7 A.M.

Chief of Police Jeremiah O'Connell decided finally that autumn is here to stay, and ordered the city's policemen to wear their blouses beginning at 7 A.M. tomorrow. For the last few days, the policemen have been going about their duties shivering in shirt sleeves.

—St Louis (Mo.) *Post-Dispatch*

*Weather news tied up with other news—election day; few statistics*

Ideal voting weather is promised for virtually all of Georgia Wednesday.

The Atlanta Weather Bureau Tuesday announced that fair to partly cloudy weather, with continued "rather warm" temperatures will prevail over the state Tuesday night and Wednesday.

"There may be a few widely scattered showers," the forecaster modified his promise slightly, "with consequent muddy roads in some of the extreme eastern and southeastern counties of the state. But taken by and large, the outlook for Wednesday promises ideal election day weather."

Temperatures Wednesday will range from an early morning low of 68 to a maximum of 90 degrees. Tuesday's range will be about the same, it was said.

—Atlanta (Ga.) *Journal*

*Weather news tied up with comfort of the reader; statistics easy to understand*

St. Louisans who had to jump out of bed early today to close windows when a storm blew into town weren't as unhappy about the storm as they might have been. The rain cooled off one of the hottest nights of the year, dropping the mercury 10 degrees in one hour.

After recording a boiling 95 at 3:15 P.M. yesterday, only .3 of a degree below the record high for the date, the weather bureau's downtown thermometer still said 80 at 2 o'clock this morning. The reading at 3 o'clock was a more comfortable 70.

Rainfall downtown totalled .41 of an inch, Meteorologist Harry F. Wahlgren reported. It was the first rain here since Sept. 8, when 1.05 of an inch fell.

The weather man wasn't very optimistic about cooler weather in the immediate future. He expects the mercury to get up to about 94 tomorrow, after a low in the morning of about 65. A thunder-shower or two tonight may help keep St. Louisans and St. Louis lawns from burning up, he said.

—St Louis (Mo.) *Post-Dispatch*

## **106. Statistics Make Features**

People like statistics—if they can understand them. That's your responsibility. They like statistics that are dramatized. That also is your responsibility. Here's how you can meet both responsibilities.

a. Play up the local angle. Readers can understand the local angle and by "bringing the story home to them" you automatically add the drama they want. For example, suppose you receive an annual automobile accident report for the nation. The report indicates that most accidents occur at night and in clear weather. A little research in your newspaper morgue or files and a bit of tabulating will give you accident figures for your own city or county. Then you can write: "Most fatal automobile accidents in Blank County last year occurred after sundown. Twenty-six persons lost their lives during the hours from dusk to dawn."

b. Show how statistics represent people. Every accident figure represents people who have been killed or injured. Ben Jones tells his friend George Wipplemouse, "George, you'd better drive slower or we'll both be statistics in tomorrow's newspaper." So, you must make the reader see the people they stand for when he reads a column of statistics.

c. Explain statistics in terms familiar to the reader. Instead of just saying that there were 2,000 acres of trees burned in Blank County forests last year, say that forest fires in Blank County burned up enough potential lumber to build a five-room house for every veteran in the county. Instead of just saying that the

Blankville Steel Company produced a million tons of steel last year, add that this was enough steel to build two million new cars or ten 20-story office buildings.

*d. Compare statistics.* One set of figures doesn't mean much unless it is thrown up against another set for comparison. Just to say that a certain farm produced a thousand bales of cotton this year means nothing. Immediately we want to know if that is good or bad. Did the farm produce what was expected? Or, did it produce more or less than was expected?

People like to read about the familiar. They will read your stories if you "dig up" local statistics for them to tell their friends about. Find out how many bales of hay the zoo buys for its elephants each year or how much horse meat is eaten by the tigers. Get the figures on how many gallons of water flow from city tanks to offices, homes, and factories each 24 hours. Or, check on the number of carloads of snow that are removed from city streets each winter. Banker Twitmonk likes to read his paper after dinner and then say to his wife, "My dear, did you know that right here in Blankville we spend enough money each year on luxuries to build a super highway 3,000 miles long or twenty school buildings?" Of course, Mrs. Twitmonk knew nothing of these things—and cared less. But if the good banker had mentioned that a local survey showed that Blankville women bought 20,000 decks of bridge cards annually, she would have been interested.

#### EXAMPLE

*A few figures go a long way, if you have a pencil and are tired*

HOB BADY DF YOW age kherf? (Whoops, excuse it please, writer's cramp)—

How many of you are there? Pick h bumper (whoops—)

Pick a number.

For instance, in 1940 there were 96,984 water meters in use in Minneapolis. In 1948 there are 103,050. In 1940 the population, according to the federal census, was 492,370.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Therefore we set up a proportion: 492,370 is to 96,984 as X is to 103,050.

X is you. And that's not writer's cramp.

That would set the city's present-day population, according to the use of water meters, at 524,197. There's another way to figure it. Divide the 1940 population, 492,370, by the 1940 number of water meters, 96,984. That gives you 5.08 persons per water meter.

Multiply the present number of water meters, 103,050, by 5.08. That gives you 523,494. It doesn't quite agree. Oh well, what's a little population?

That wbuker's champ (whoops—) writer's cramp is setting in already.

In an effort to get a check on our present-day population, I exercised my extremely limited mathematical ability, not to mention a kind friend with a slide rule in the latter stages, to attempt to learn how many souls are at present residing within the environs of Minneapolis.

The water meter total was one check. Another was electric meters.

For the area, in 1940, there were 142,974 customers. At the end of 1947, there were 150,281. At a figure of 3.44 persons per 1940 unit, that figures out to a present population of 516,967, which was the lowest of the figures cast.

I don't know what those fractions of people think of this process.

The telephone analysis presented complications. In the metropolitan service area at the end of February, 1940, there were 155,723 telephones in use. At the same time in 1948, there were 242,808.

In the meantime, however, the Hopkins and South exchanges have been added. Subtracting the Hopkins listings, 3,640, and Bloomington-Savage listings, 1,130, from the present total and then going through the same rigmarole, it works out to 754,960 people. Jeepers!

There is another gimmick in the gas meter situation. Customers for March, 1940, totaled 129,190. The comparable figure now is 141,838. (Suburban listings for the same period increased from 5,285 to 13,271. We're just wallowing in statistics.)

On the basis of 3.81 persons per listing, that figures out to 540,403 present-day persons. However, eight years ago many houses had two meters, one for heating and one for cooking, and each was figured as a separate customer.

Gas use in m. cu. ft. increased more than three times, giving a population estimate of 1,541,118. Electric kilowatt hours jumped to show an indicated population of 823,900. Bank deposits would show a

present population of 1,090,599.8. That .8 person is presumably a boy of 16.

These can't, however, be considered as reliable. An average of the four utilities-customers estimates whacks up at 583,956. And that's still too high.

John R. Coan, the postmaster, for instance, figures that on the basis of mail deliveries there are 535,000 to 540,000 persons in the city.

A business management magazine after a check last summer set the trade population at about 530,000.

A survey of parking space would make it about 2,500,000. The figure of 530,000 with a possible upward slant to 540,000, seems most reasonable.

Now, in St. Paul, the pepulitiob oy dhe bavis pf wawer bebers (whoops, writer's cramps. Lay that pencil down, Murph.)

—*Minneapolis Star*

## **107. Sports**

The readability problem of the sports writer handling statistics is less acute than that of the writer of news of government because the sports enthusiast generally is record-conscious and will spend more time analyzing and digesting sports facts. Nevertheless, the sports writer can make the reader's fact-digesting process much easier by telling him what the records and scores mean when compared with those made by other teams and players. The sports writer makes considerable use of sports history to help explain the statistics he uses. He explains the significance of what happened in today's game by comparing it with the one last week or the game played with the same team last year or even ten years ago. He also uses statistics to back up his own interpretation of the relative strength or weakness of a team or individual players. He might, for example, say that the Blankville University backfield is showing less power this year than last. Then, he clinches his interpretation by pointing out that only 220 yards have been gained through opposing lines this season in comparison with 340 yards gained last year. He might

further point out statistics to show that this year's blocking by the local team is just as good as it was last year.

Statistics of various contests of skill and endurance lack significance unless they are interpreted for the reader. The sports writer draws upon his newspaper's files and his own knowledge of sports records to fill in this background. He must use this sports history, however, in such a way that he does not detract from the action, drama, and importance of today's contest.

Sports statistics are widely used in pre-game stories and sports features. They help give the sports lover a picture of sports and players that he might never dig out for himself. They help develop sports "experts" who use the figures they have gleaned from newspaper articles for their Monday morning "quarterbacking."

In using statistics the sports writer must (a) be fair and accurate in his selection of facts and figures; (b) use records that are pertinent to the sports subject discussed; (c) not confuse the reader with too many statistics in any one paragraph; and, (d) explain his statistics in terms the reader can understand.

Statistics the fans want:

a. Attendance records. A crowd of 65,607 fans saw the game to swell the Yankee home attendance total to 2,342,541, a new record for the Yanks.

b. Pennant or title position. The Boston Red Sox and the Cleveland Indians once again are tied for first place in the tinging American League pennant race.

c. Games won and lost to date. Boston and Cleveland have won 92 games and lost 56 and the Yanks won 91 games and lost 57. All three have six games left to play.

d. Individual player records. Jack Kramer stopped the Yanks scattering seven hits to hang up his seventeenth victory.

e. Gate receipts. A capacity stadium crowd of 59,343 paid \$179,029 last night to see the Bear maul the Packers and win 35 to 6.



*f. Team records.* That was the first time Notre Dame had trailed anybody since their last defeat, nineteen games ago, when they lost to Great Lakes, 39-7.

*g. Game statistics.* Ohio moved 88 yards in nine plays for its first marker, Pandel Savic sparking the drive with a 35-yard pass to Bob Dorsey and a 13-yarder to Mike Cannavino.

### EXAMPLE

*Baseball story backgrounded with statistics of attendance, pennant position, games won and lost, and player performance*

The Browns still haven't reached the total of victories scored by the 1947 club but the season's home attendance was slightly better, though not approaching the totals, by hundreds of thousands recorded by other major league teams.

As the curtain was lowered on the Sportsman's Park phase of the Brown's campaign yesterday, with 3,895 fans watching a 3-0 white-wash job by the Chicago White Sox, the total home attendance announced by the St. Louis management was 335,564. Last year the club drew 320,488.

Manager Zack Taylor, pointing out that a couple of good starting pitchers, not to mention an improvement in the bull pen corps, would greatly boost the chances of his sixth-place team to finish higher in '49, is not overlooking other bets.

With 57 victories in the bag, though having lost six of their last seven starts, the Browns need only two triumphs in seven remaining contests to match their 59 of last year. They are to play three times in Detroit, starting tomorrow, and four games on two dates in Chicago.

Though the season standing with Chicago (still wishfully hoping to vacate the cellar) is 12 and 6 in favor of the Browns, the final home game didn't prove that .667 average. The White Sox got a well-pitched game from the former Yankee, Randy Gumpert, who had won only two previous games all year.

Gumpert scattered six safeties in gaining his much deserved shutout and two of those were ninth inning softies. Meanwhile, a few White Sox veterans took care of the run production. Thirty-five-year-old Taft Wright twice drove in Tony Lupien with singles and on one of those innings ancient Luke Appling chipped in with his second safety of the

hit-and-run. Don Killoway, no spring chicken any more, made three hits and Cass Michaels drove in No. 3 with a long fly.

—St. Louis (Mo.) *Post-Dispatch*

## 108. Know These Terms

**ASSETS** The capital of the company including property, equipment, accounts receivable, stock on hand, and good will. Current or liquid assets are those readily marketable. Fixed or frozen assets are those not readily marketable.

**AUDIT** A check of the records and accounts of a corporation or government agency to verify their accuracy.

**BALANCED BUDGET** A budget is said to be balanced when either the estimated expenses have been cut to make them the same as the estimated revenue, or when taxes have been raised to increase the estimated revenue so it equals the estimated expenses.

**BANK DEBITS** Bank debits are the amounts charged against individual accounts because of checks written on those accounts. They are a valuable index of the amount of spending being done and the volume of business carried on in the community where the bank debits are reported.

**BANKRUPTCY** "Voluntary bankruptcy" is the term used when the debtors petition a court to

assign their assets to their creditors. The term is "involuntary bankruptcy" when the creditors are the petitioners. The person or firm declared legally bankrupt is discharged from further liability after assets have been taken over by a court for assignment to the creditors.

**BEAR** A person who expects prices to drop. He sells with the idea of buying back at a cheaper price. By unloading certain stocks he expects to force the price down so that he can buy them back at a cheaper price.

**BIENNIUM BUDGET** A budget covering a two-year period. In states where the legislature meets only once every two years, the biennium budgets are used.

**BOND** An interest-bearing obligation of a government or corporation payable to the holder on a fixed maturity date. The bond is the evidence of the debt, the formal promise to pay back money borrowed. A city might issue bonds to finance a new school building, or a street-paving program. Private citizens would buy the bonds as investments, expect-

ing the city to take up the bonds after a specified number of years.

**BOND CALLED FOR REDEMPTION** Refers to bonds that are being redeemed or "called for" before their maturity dates. The borrower wishes to pay his debts before the time given him, so he calls in bonds he has issued. Newspapers list such bonds, the redemption price, and the date when the redemption is to be effected.

**BUDGET** A balance sheet of estimated revenue and expenditures designed for financing the business of a future period.

**BULL** A person who expects prices to rise. He buys with the idea of selling at a profit later. By excessive buying he expects to stimulate the market and thus cause prices to rise so that he can sell at a profit.

**CALL LOANS** Loans subject to payment upon demand.

**CLEARINGS** The amount of checks and drafts going through collection during a specified time. The clearings of all banks in a city provide an index to the business activity in that city.

**COMMERCIAL PAPER** A term used to cover several kinds of notes, bills of exchange, etc., upon which loans are made by banks. Loans are sometimes made upon

backlogs of orders for goods or sound financial statements.

**COMMODITY MARKETS** Markets dealing in goods that have utility value. Farm products are some of the more important goods sold on commodity markets like the Chicago Board of Trade and the New York Cotton Exchange. Important commodities are: cotton, grain, wool, copper, rubber, cocoa, potatoes, and sugar.

**COMMON STOCK** Paper certifying part ownership in a corporation. Owners of common stock are the last to receive profits or the proceeds of liquidation of the corporation.

**CONTRACT DELIVERY** Farm products, particularly grains, are sold several months ahead of the harvest date. This is known as dealing in "futures." The seller contracts to make delivery at a specified date. This is known as contract delivery.

**DEBT SERVICE** Debt service is interest due on money borrowed. In the federal budget interest payable on the national debt is called "debt service."

**DEFICIENCY (EMERGENCY) APPROPRIATION** If a state, for example, runs short of money before the legislature regularly meets, an emergency session may be called by the governor to ask

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

for a deficiency or emergency appropriation.

**DEFICIT** A shortage—amount of money needed to balance the books, amount by which expenditures exceed receipts.

**DEPRECIATION** Decrease in value through use or disuse.

**DIVIDEND** The share of the profits that is paid to one who owns stock in a business.

**FISCAL YEAR** A twelve-month period designated as the “financial” year of the business or governmental agency. Budgets are made up on the basis of the fiscal year and the firm or agency’s books are balanced at the end of the period. The fiscal year of the federal government runs from July 1 to June 30. Many businesses use the calendar year for their fiscal year; that is, Jan. 1 to Dec. 31.

**FREIGHT CAR LOADINGS** Indicate the movement by rail of raw materials and manufactured products throughout the nation—good index of business conditions. Re-conversion after World War II was quickly indicated in the change in freight car loadings from war goods to peacetime products.

**FROZEN ASSETS** See *Assets*.

**FUTURES** Contracts for future delivery. See *Contract Delivery*.

**GROSS INCOME** Income before any deductions have been made.

**INSOLVENT** Unable to pay off—the insolvent firm is one unable to pay its creditors.

**INVESTMENT** Has two financial meanings: (a) act of using money to make a profit such as investing in bonds to collect the interest; (b) that in which money is invested—in college accounting, for example, the term might mean the value of the buildings, property, equipment, and library books. So you would say there is an investment in the college of 20 million dollars, meaning that the physical plant is worth 20 million dollars.

**LIABILITIES** What the firm owes. This includes taxes due, capital stock, accounts payable, and notes payable.

**LIQUID ASSETS** See *Assets*.

**LONGS** Persons who own more securities or commodities than they have agreed to deliver.

**MANDATORY (FIXED) EXPENSE** Commonly listed in government budgets. Refers to obligations assumed in the past that must be met for years in the future. For example, in the federal budget interest on the national debt, funds for veteran education and

rehabilitation, and national defense are "fixed" expenses.

**NET EXPENSE** The difference between income and expenditures when expenditures were greater than income—a loss. The term is used in some governmental accounting to denote how much the agency went "in the red."

**NET INCOME** Indicates actual earnings of a business. It is the income after operating expenses have been deducted. Some firms use the term "net income after all charges and taxes." This is a better indication of actual earnings. Net income in a government financial report means a surplus.

**NET WORKING CAPITAL** Obtained by subtracting current liabilities from current assets. If the resulting figure is large, the company is probably strong financially.

**NONRECURRING PROFIT** A profit resulting from investments outside of normal business operations of a company. Such profits might come from sales of real estate or tax refunds. Sometimes nonrecurring profits are included in net income and sometimes they are listed separately.

**PARITY** The price a commodity

will bring which will give it a purchasing power, with respect to articles farmers buy, equal to the purchasing power of the commodity between August, 1909, and July, 1914.

**PREFERRED STOCK** Stock "senior" to common shares in that holders get their dividends before holders of common stock are paid. In the event of liquidation of the firm preferred stockholders are paid first.

**PRICE PEGGING** Process of holding prices at a fixed level.

**RESERVE** Cash money or other liquid assets kept available to pay off depositors or meet other obligations.

**SECURITY MARKETS** Markets that deal in money and credit.

**SHORTS** Persons who have contracted to deliver more securities or commodities than they own.

**SINKING FUND** Reserve fund into which money is placed at specific times to be used by an issuer of bonds to call them in.

**TIME LOANS** Loans for a set time—no change in date of payment unless both parties agree.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# *Reporting Local Government*

109. Government Reports	294
110. City Council	297
111. Government Finance	300
112. City Planning, Zoning, and Building	303
113. Police and Fire Protection	305
114. Social Welfare	309
115. Sanitation and Drainage	314
116. Streets and Highways	316
117. News from the Township	318
118. Special Districts	319
119. Schools and School Districts	320
120. County Supervisors, Trustees, or Commissioners	324
121. Terminology	328
122. Your Local Government Organization	332

The reporting of government today has become such a complex problem that the service of experts or specialists in certain areas is highly desirable. The general reporter who has a specialized knowledge of taxes and government finance, zoning and city planning, social welfare agencies, or education has a distinct advantage over his fellow workers. In the following pages only a few of the problems involved in these specializations will be discussed.

## **109. Government Reports**

There's a lot of interesting and significant news buried away in government reports. But it doesn't do the reader much good if reporters fail to uncover this news, or if they do uncover it, present it to him in indigestible form. One of the first duties of the reporter covering any phase of government is to find out what reports are issued, the nature of the reports, where they can be obtained, if they are required by law, and what the news possibilities are.

Government reports appear in various forms. They may be printed in book or pamphlet format or they may consist of type-written or mimeographed pages. Whatever the format, the reporter should examine the material with the following points in mind:

a. What is the theme of the report; that is, what is the problem about which the writer is most concerned? You can discover the theme if you look for one or more of the following: (1) *complaints*—does the report deal with complaints about certain con-

ditions? (2) *charges*—does the writer make any charges concerning particular conditions? (3) *problems*—does the report emphasize the problems of the issuing government agency? (4) *finances*—is the report concerned solely with the receipts and expenditures of the issuing government agency? (5) *progress*—is the principal emphasis in the report on “steps forward” of the department, accomplishments, new buildings, increased personnel, etc? (6) *activities*—does the report tell of experimental work, discoveries, or inventions?

b. How much of the report is propaganda and promotion for the issuing agency? Even straight lists of facts and figures can be made to tell a good story for the government agency. For example, the annual report of the city fire chief can make the fire department look pretty good if fire losses for the year are reported at a low figure. The fire chief usually makes his own estimate of the amount of each fire loss, and those are the figures he uses in his report. The figures may be on the conservative side, and if that is the case, the reporter should compare them with other estimates.

c. Does the report have a current news tie-up? Does it have a seasonal appeal? A government report on coal mine inspections would have a particularly important news tie-up at the time of a coal mine disaster, and a Department of Agriculture report on planting seasons would interest the spring gardener.

d. Is the report the result of an investigation or an answer to charges of a person or persons? Reports issued by special boards and commissions should be studied carefully, especially around election time. Sometimes for political reasons some of the findings of a commission may be withheld from the report released for publication.

e. What is the period of time covered by the report? Is it issued annually, semiannually, quarterly, monthly, or weekly? Is it a special report issued by direction of some higher authority?

f. How does the report compare with previous reports issued

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

by the same department? Items left out of the current report that were included in past reports may be significant. Look for things in the current report that can be compared fairly with those in previous reports.

If a government report has a message of any importance at all, it is worth telling well. Most often the theme of the report makes the best lead, especially if the theme has a current news tie-in. Statistics, when dramatized to show the immediate or eventual effect on the reader, often make a good lead. For example, instead of writing,

Fire losses in Blankville last year totaled \$450,000, according to the annual report of the fire chief which was issued today.

write it,

Carelessness cost Blankville citizens a quarter of a million dollars in fire losses last year, Fire Chief Joe Davies reported today.

The 1948 annual report of fire losses in the city showed that fire and smoke damage totaled \$450,000, an increase of \$90,000 over 1947. Fire losses of \$250,000 were caused by citizens smoking in bed, carelessly tossed matches, and use of gasoline in the home as a cleaning fluid.

The reader should not be left in doubt as to the source of the statements you quote, paraphrase, or summarize from a government report. Tell him in the lead, or very soon thereafter, that your authority for the news was a government report. Work the source into the body of your story often enough to keep him straight on the matter. If you use material from other sources as background, point out to him where you got it.

Try to make your news story of a government report fairly represent the material in the report. Do not distort the full meaning of the report by emphasizing parts of it and ignoring points you dislike. Let your reader pass judgment on such matters. In this respect your story of the report must be a "review" and not a criticism.

## **110. City Council**

Municipal lawmaking bodies (city councils, boards of aldermen, city commissioners) are sources of news of considerable importance to the local taxpayer. The newsman who reports the meetings of such bodies in a dull, routine fashion will not be read by many citizens. His stories should reveal the personalities of the lawmakers and their zeal for the public good. He should make the council meetings live for the citizens who did not attend. He should be careful in his use of "city hall" terminology and "ordinance" language in his stories. Few readers, for example, would know what the reporter was talking about in the following paragraph:

A resolution was brought by Alderman Snootz that the city withdraw special assessment claims against two pieces of property sold in a scavenger sale at the courthouse last year, since they were bought with the understanding the amount paid included special assessments as well as general taxes. B. O. Yew, chairman of the finance committee, said there is also a responsibility to the bondholders. He approved on information the two accounts, Blue Avenue and Fitzpugh Addition lights, had been closed out. Through an error the assessment claims had not been added when the scavenger list was made, Snootz said, remarking that it was a low number of errors.

Most city council news develops from one or more of the following types of "business" handled by the council:

- a. Complaints or requests of citizens presented in petitions.
- b. Complaints or requests of citizens presented in letters to the council.
- c. Ordinances proposed by individual council members.
- d. Appearance of special delegations of citizens before the council to complain about local conditions and request council action. Special meetings of the council with citizen groups.
- e. Authorizations for purchase of new equipment for city departments.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

f. Authorization of special studies by department heads or special committees (traffic studies, smoke abatement studies, juvenile delinquency studies).

g. Authorization for public improvements (street paving, installation of traffic lights and signs, repair to city buildings).

h. Reports of heads of departments or other city officials.

i. Appointment of committees.

j. Changes in or amendments to old ordinances. Reporters should watch for changes that allow one person or group to do something forbidden to all others.

k. Opening of bids—approval or rejection of bids.

l. Approval of bills for payment.

m. Authorization of the city attorney to take official action for the city against individuals.

n. Motions by council members.

o. Reports concerning, and action taken on, city finance.

Much city council news has little meaning for the reader because the reporter fails to "footnote" his article with background facts. The memory of the average reader is short. You can't expect him to recall that your last week's story explained why a new parking ordinance was necessary. This week's story of the passage of the ordinance should be tied in with last week's story of the need for the new regulation.

Clashes of personalities on the council or between council members and visitors add reader interest to your story, but they should not be overemphasized at the expense of the news. Use such material scattered through your story as "hookers" to keep the reader interested. Use of this kind of copy helps you to get people into your story. Also it helps to make flesh-and-blood people out of council members instead of leaving them for the voter to visualize as an austere, mysterious group. Be careful not to inject conflict or hint at conflict where there is none.

News of proposed ordinances is important to the city reader. He relies upon the reporter to tell him what action the city is

about to take so that he can organize his opposition. He should be told (a) who introduced the ordinance; (b) the reason the ordinance was introduced; (c) what stage has been reached in the legislative process; (d) how the ordinance will affect him; (e) what opposition has developed; (f) when the ordinance will be up for further consideration; and (g) what council members and local groups favor the proposal.

Council meetings are special kinds of meetings. For hints on meeting coverage see Chapter Ten.

#### **EXAMPLE**

*Council discusses the city's liquor ordinance; reporter quotes council members frequently; humor injected*

Blankville city councilmen Tuesday considered—but failed to adopt—an amendment to the liquor ordinance which would allow the Oldvets to operate a bar at the post's new home, 777 West Bottlecap Avenue.

The proposal was referred to City Attorney Horace O. Underdown with comments indicating the councilmen fear the subject may become a "hot" one.

As drafted by Attorney Oliver U. Hornbostle and submitted to the council by Underdown, the amendment would move the line beyond which hard liquor cannot be sold. It also would eliminate a present provision that licenses can be issued only to clubs in existence prior to Jan. 1, 1940.

Limits intended to confine the sale of liquor to the business districts now run down Main Street. The proposed amendment would move the boundary 210 feet west on Mountain Avenue, thereby taking in the house recently purchased by the Oldvets.

None of the councilmen offered a motion for its adoption when the proposal was read by the clerk. Commissioner Roger Dodger declared, "I don't view it with enthusiasm." Later he predicted, "We'll be visited by delegations about this."

Finally, Mayor Rodney Z. Quistel instructed Underdown to take the amendment back and redraft it.

"Make it apply just to club licenses; we don't want to open up the way for saloons in that area," the mayor told the attorney. He added,

"Make it just national clubs—we don't want private clubs springing up either."

Councilmen indicated they were concerned that a request for similar concessions will be received from Blankville Post 030 of the Golfers Legion, which also is opening a veterans' home. The Legion home is at 666 East Rocky Street, deep in a residential area.

"Don't bring that up," Commissioner Ivey Sadface pleaded when someone mentioned the possibility.

Later when Mayor Quistel asked, "Say, how did the country club get a license?" Commissioner Dodger said:

"Now, Mr. Mayor, that dog was sleeping quietly. Why did you have to kick it?"

Earlier, Quistel suggested to Underdown that when he finds time he should revise the city liquor ordinance. He declared it now has so many amendments pasted onto it that "no one can find his way through it."

## **111. Government Finance**

The most important phases of government finance were discussed in sections 94, 95, and 97 under the headings Budgets, Financial Statements, and Taxes and Tax Levies. Generally, news of government financial operations is dull, hard to understand, and uninteresting to most readers. The reporter has to work hard at the job of making this kind of news readable, but it is a service which he owes the taxpayer. It is a service which his newspaper must give in the interest of good government.

The following government financial activities make news and should be reported carefully, clearly, and interestingly:

*a. Special assessments.* These are made when special needs arise that were not foreseen and put in the annual budget. Your reader will want to know how much the assessment will be, why it is necessary, if assessment bonds will be issued, and what the whole thing will cost him. Stories about the retirement of special assessment bonds should explain what this means in the way of sound government finance.



*b. Government costs.* Government “housekeepers” are affected by changes in the cost of living like anyone else. Sharp rises in prices after the budget has been approved and the money appropriated mean that the particular agency will have to curtail its services to the people or it will run out of money before the end of the fiscal year. The reporter should explain the situation to his readers so they will expect less of the office concerned or see that additional funds are voted.

*c. Tax anticipation warrants.* There is often a lag between the time money is needed for government expenses and the time taxes are collected. But governments are expected to meet their bills when they are due. Employees expect to receive their checks on payday and not when citizens begin to pay their taxes six months later. To bridge this time gap the government finance officer sometimes issues tax anticipation warrants for which local banks give him cash to pay the government’s bills. News stories about tax anticipation warrants should make clear to the reader what the warrants are, why it was necessary for the government to issue them, and what taxes they were issued against.

*d. Salary changes.* Readers ought to be interested in how much money they pay their government officials. Reporters need to present this subject tactfully. Working conditions, retirement systems, sick benefits, vacations, leaves of absence, and insurance protections are all part of the same picture. Changes in the status of any of these things should be reported to the taxpayer along with reasons for the change. The reporter should inform citizens that their city is paying poorer salaries and wages than neighboring cities of comparable size. He can dig up many informative feature articles on this general topic.

*e. Audits of government accounts.* Periodically, the accounts of every government official from the local dogcatcher to the highest finance officer of the nation are audited by private accountants hired to do the job. These audits make good stories. If the audits are not made at the proper time, the reporter

should seek the cause of the delay and write his story accordingly. The reader will want to know who will do the auditing, when the audit will take place, and how much it will cost. After the audit has been made, he will want to know the results and whether the audit was accepted by the body authorizing it to be made.

*f. Allocation of funds.* Reports of funds being handed down from a higher branch of government to a lower one make news. When the federal government gives a state a few million dollars (to be matched by the state) for airports, readers want to know where the field will be built, when construction will begin, the kinds of airports to be built, and how the state funds will be raised. Many persons are interested in such stories because they have "fish to fry," as the fellow says. Local politicians and chamber of commerce officials are interested in the locations of the airports. Real estate dealers are interested in the property involved. Construction engineers are interested in bidding on the work. Air freight and passenger transport officials are interested in using the fields. They want to know when the fields will be ready.

For example, reports of motor fuel tax monies allocated to a city from state funds make news. The reader wants to know how the city plans to use the money, if the funds are sufficient for the needs, if the city is getting as much motor fuel money as was expected at the beginning of the fiscal year, and how his city's receipts compare with those of other cities. Sometimes the size of the fund allocated has a direct affect upon the newspaper reader. If the state's collections are less than expected, Blankville gets less and may not be able to repair some of the city streets. Or, the Blankville schools will have less money on which to operate so that fifty pupils will be packed into a room that formerly accommodated only thirty-five. These things the reporter must know about and inform his readers.

**EXAMPLE**

*Federal funds allocated for airports; local area benefits*

The federal government announced today a \$71,591,856 airport construction and improvement program which will include twelve Kentucky fields.

Uncle Sam will put up \$33,899,265. States, cities, and counties will provide the remaining \$37,692,591.

The program is the first of a seven-year plan calling for expenditure by the federal government of \$500,000,000. Local sponsors of projects will be called upon to put up as much or more.

Civil Aeronautics Administrator T. P. Wright said all federal funds this year will be allocated to smaller airports, those up to a size suitable for small commercial transport planes.

Construction on the projects announced today is not expected to start on any considerable scale before spring.

All the federal money comes out of a \$45,000,000 fund appropriated by the last Congress, 5 per cent of which was earmarked for administration.

Kentucky projects for which funds were allocated are: Lexington, \$66,200; Cynthiana, \$152,400; Frankfort, \$100,000; Hazard, \$40,000; London-Corbin, \$180,000; Middlesboro-Bell, \$81,500; Pikeville, \$338,546; Mayfield, \$133,000; Murray, \$43,700; Newport, \$95,000; Owensboro, \$50,500, and Paducah, \$180,000.

## **112. City Planning, Zoning, and Building**

No phase of local government is more important for the health, safety, and general welfare of citizens than those activities involving city and county planning, zoning, and restrictions on building. And yet, these activities are little understood by the average citizen because they are regulated by extremely complex planning and zoning ordinances. The reporter covering these matters must learn that city planning is not just another news item which he picks up only when the planning commission meets. Stories on planning and zoning are available every day in the year, if he has the curiosity and interest to dig them up.

Good zoning and planning laws provide for controlled growth of the city and county so that "blighted areas" do not spread. What does the reporter need to know about these things and what should he put into his stories?

He should know (a) planning and zoning regulations in his city and county; (b) the various local government activities affected by long-range planning; (c) local persons and groups most interested in city planning; (d) the various sources of funds usable for planning surveys, and (e) the current point reached by planning officials in his community.

His stories should reveal (a) the problems faced by city and county planning officials; (b) what they are doing about these problems; (c) what the long-range plan is; (d) need for cooperation among various planning groups; (e) financial needs; (f) what city and county planning mean to individuals in terms of better living; (g) what specific phases of the over-all plan are being discussed now, and how soon these phases will be completed.

The reporter must remember that most local government activities are connected in some way with city planning. Problems of drainage, traffic control, downtown parking, garbage disposal, and sanitation are all involved in city planning. No longer, for example, can the real estate editor of a newspaper write solely about real estate transactions. He must know city planning, zoning, and building restrictions. He should be able to get the maximum amount of news from a weekly or monthly report of building permits issued by local officials. He should know building costs and designs. He should know something about local labor conditions in the building trades field.

### **113. Police and Fire Protection**

Police and fire protection are vital to every city. They are services paid for by the taxpayer and therefore should be of

interest to him. Routine stories of fires and arrests, however, are not enough to give the Blankville citizen a complete picture of what goes on in his city police and fire departments. Like other city government reporters, the person on the police and fire beat can get a story every day in the year if he digs around and asks questions. Weekly, monthly, and annual *reports* of the heads of these departments make good stories when they are compared with those of other periods, footnoted with background material about other cities of comparable size, and interpreted simply. Inspections by fire officials are important and make news. If the reporter knows fire and safety ordinances in his community, he can make inspections on his own and report bad conditions. The time for a newspaper to campaign for stricter enforcement of fire laws is not after a major fire, but all during the year. Then the fires won't occur. *Training* activities of both departments provide educational copy for the citizen who complains that fire and police workers loaf when they are not making arrests or answering fire calls. Fire colleges and short courses, police schools, and recruit training should be reported carefully so that citizens can evaluate the efficiency of their local departments. *Salaries, working conditions, and job requirements* should be examined periodically and reported in special stories. If Blankville is behind other cities in these matters, tell the citizens. Your stories will help fire and police chiefs to get additional funds to correct the local condition. Citizens like to know about fire and police protection *costs*. Is the per capita cost in Blankville higher than it should be? What is the reason—carelessness on the part of the citizens, poor equipment, bad laws, improperly trained personnel, or politics? Readers are interested in *science* and *progress* in connection with fire and police protection. They want to know what are the latest scientific methods used in crime detection, fire fighting, and rescue operations. They want to know the part radio plays, the use of truth serums and lie detectors, and how up to date Blankville is in these matters.

Where do you get all of these stories? First, you have to learn thoroughly the organization and operation of the local departments. Then, you must familiarize yourself with the various state and national publications concerned with police and fire information. Learn what reports are prepared by officials and when they are available. Find out what publications fire and police officials themselves read. Check the resources of local libraries. After that, it is a matter of keeping your eyes open, asking questions, and planning your stories for every day in the year.

#### EXAMPLES

*A story about police protection in several cities; story written after considerable research and report analysis*

Contrasting views and statistics on police work in American cities have just come to public attention in Chicago. They are of interest to the taxpayer.

According to findings of the International City Managers' Association, whose headquarters are here, citizens generally are getting improved police protection.

The Association deduces this from figures which show that the number of police per unit of population is increasing, qualifications for personnel are being raised, and for cities over 10,000 population the average salary increased 23 percent in the past three years. Also, more cities have put police retirement plans in operation, presumably making the work more attractive.

Looking at the dollar cost of these changes, the ICMA reports that police coverage took 22 cents more out of the average city dweller's pocketbook in 1947 than it did in 1946. Cities over 500,000 averaged \$8.32 per capita police costs in 1947, compared to \$3.35 for cities under 25,000 population. For all cities, police salaries comprised almost 90 per cent of total police costs.

There is much more than the dollar cost of police operations, however. Beyond the money expense to the taxpayer and the community lies the cost in unsolved and unpunished crime—items which do not appear on balance sheets. Inept and inefficient police work may be extremely costly to society, regardless of the amount of money spent.

Poignant observations on the subject were made by Raymond C.

Schindler, noted investigator and criminologist, in a recent address before the Executive Club of Chicago. In Mr. Schindler's opinion, the peak of efficiency in crime prevention and solution will not be achieved until police bureaus are freed from political control.

A police force cannot be expected to do its best work, Mr. Schindler said, when its members stand in continual danger of being replaced following a change in city administration, transfer or demotion at the request of a politician, or other reprisals. Police administration should be free of politics if the best interests of a community are to be served, he added. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was cited by Mr. Schindler as an example of efficiency where political interference is at a minimum.

Crime solution and the apprehension of criminals is also impeded by duplication of agencies, Mr. Schindler believes. He said that in some cities investigators for the city police, the sheriff, and the district attorney may be working on the same case and handicapping each other's efforts. Sometimes, he said, evidence is uncovered by one set of investigators which would be of great value to another group, but is not made available to them because of fear of losing credit or public acclaim if the case is solved. Only one man should be in charge of investigating a crime, he declared.

Meanwhile, cities are continually improving the physical equipment with which their police forces have to work. In Chicago, three-wheeled motorcycles have replaced police horses for traffic work in the Loop, and arrangements are underway for a new and easily accessible traffic court which will conserve the time of policemen.

In Madison, Wis., according to a survey of municipal services just released by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, eight new services have been added to the City Police Department in the last 10 years. Progressive steps such as the establishment of a Police School in 1946 have been taken. A police gymnasium was provided in 1946.

A high school education or its equivalent now is required of police recruits in 52 per cent of the cities reporting to the ICMA. The best showing on this point was made by cities of from 250,000 to 500,000 population, with 11 out of 18 reporting that high school education is a prerequisite to appointment on the police force.

Reports from 877 cities to the Association gave an average of 1.89 police employees per 1,000 population, a 4.4 percent increase for 1947 over 1946. The Association says there has been a steady upswing in

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

police per capita since the wartime low in 1945 of 1.58 police workers per 1,000 city residents.

The highest pay for regular policemen, when the ICMA survey was made, was \$3,900 a year in New York. Runners-up were Washington, \$3,398; Toledo, Ohio, \$3,300; and Long Beach, Calif., \$3,300. The New York Police Commissioner's Salary was \$13,500, also the nation's highest.

Increases in police salaries must be weighed against increases in cost of living. In the three years 1945-47, when police wages went up a reported 23 per cent, living costs of the average consumer increased from 128.4 of the 1935-39 average in 1945 to 163.8 per cent by Oct. 15, 1947. At the beginning of 1948 the rate was 168.8. Thus, while police wages were upped 23 per cent the cost of living, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, went up by approximately 40 per cent more of the 1935-39 average.

—*Christian Science Monitor*

### *Annual report of the police chief indicates degree of law violation in Blankville and fines assessed*

Fines totaling \$13,270.88 were assessed against persons violating the law in Blankville last year, including \$916.88 for parking violations, Police Chief Thurman Thurlby reported Monday.

The annual report covering the period from May 1, 1947, through April 30, 1948, showed 790 arrests were made by Blankville police. In all, police responded to 1,607 calls.

Of the arrests, 56 were made for driving while intoxicated, 190 for intoxication, 114 for speeding, 111 for violating stop signs and traffic signals, 169 for disorderly conduct, 10 for having a liquor bottle with a broken seal in the car, and 103 for minor traffic violations.

The chief reported six cases of grand larceny during the year, three of auto larceny, six of petit larceny, and 22 vagrancy offenses.

A total of 142 accidents was reported. Police found open and secured 172 business houses. There were 25 attempted burglaries, 32 burglaries, 27 stolen bicycles recovered and 392 nuisances and disturbances abated.

In a report of police activities for the month of April, Thurlby said \$496 in fines was collected, including \$70.60 through the cafeteria court for parking violations.



## **114. Social Welfare**

The reporter covering social or public welfare agencies must learn about the purposes of these agencies so that he develops the "long-term" view. He must not think of public welfare in the narrow sense of charity and relief services. By studying the organization, personnel setup, and services of all agencies in his community the reporter can more clearly see the over-all picture. Family service, for example, in your community is not primarily a relief agency. Its other activities are indicated in the following statement describing the Family Service Bureau of the United Charities of Chicago:

The professional staff of Family Service Bureau is trained to recognize in the requests which people make for help, basic difficulties that are the results of conflicts inside the individuals themselves. Marital conflicts, disruptive child behavior, family quarrels, teen-aged rebellion—all these are caused by inner stresses which individual family members feel.

For the most responsible reporting of social welfare agencies the reporter must cooperate with the welfare worker. He must recognize that the very nature of the service given is based upon a confidential doctor-patient relationship. Most of the time stories that point up social needs or conditions can be used without names and still adequately inform the public.

Social agencies are oftentimes poorly covered for at least two reasons; (a) the reporter knows little about the services being rendered daily by the office and therefore does not know what questions to ask—he expects to pick up news prepared as a "handout," or he waits for something spectacular to break; and, (b) the social worker knows little about newspaper needs, what is newsworthy in the things he is doing, and therefore has a stock answer, "Nothing doing today," when the reporter calls.

The reporter should know the scope of social welfare activities in his community. In large cities the number of agencies might

run well over a hundred. In other cities the reporter can keep tab of them on his two hands. Generally, these services involve old age assistance, family service, supervision of foster homes, work with medical and dental clinics of all kinds, rehabilitation and counseling services, vocational therapy, nursing homes and nursery services, employment aid, aid for the physically handicapped, and educational and recreational activities.

It is extremely important in social welfare reporting that you do not go "overboard" in reporting statistics that appear sensational. Keep the public informed but do not alarm citizens unnecessarily. Many of the faults in this connection have appeared in the field of juvenile delinquency. Too often a few juvenile crime cases are used to depict a trend toward a juvenile "crime wave" that fails to develop, or never was in the making. (See Chapter Six, Reporting Juvenile Delinquency.)

What is the taxpayer entitled to know about social welfare agencies in your community?

*a. Budgets and financial statements.* He has the right to know where the money for the agencies comes from and how it is spent. This also applies to quasi-public agencies like Community Chest and other agencies spending funds solicited from the public. In instances where budgets are not provided by Community Chests officers the reporters should ask for such reports for use in their newspapers.

*b. Needs and services.* Local readers ought to be told what the social needs of their community are and how they are being met. If services are inadequate, the reporter should indicate the condition in his news stories. If personnel is incompetent, that too should be indicated—with the facts.

Local reporters should keep in mind the value of the social agency as a source of background material that will help clarify other news in the community. For example, during strikes, panics, periods of housing shortage, and epidemics, the social agency oftentimes can provide information showing how ab-

normal conditions are affecting the "grass roots" levels of the community. The rising cost of living is a major news item during periods of inflation. The social agency is an excellent barometer of things to come. It is also a good yardstick by which to measure what the changes really mean to the community. After a bad hailstorm in an agricultural community, you naturally interview the county farm agent about damage to crops. When there are abnormal social upheavals in your community, you should turn to the social agencies for reports of damage to human welfare.

### **EXAMPLES**

#### *Routine story from Family Service points up a local need*

Forty-eight boys in families in necessitous circumstances remain desperately in need of warm clothing for the opening of school next week.

Miss Helen D. Troy, acting director of Family Service, said today that Blankville residents responded generously to the appeal issued Sunday through the *News*, but most of the items in the 12 to 14 boxes of clothing donated were for girls.

"We sincerely appreciate the very useful garments contributed and will be able to outfit a number of girls, but we received almost nothing for boys," Miss Troy declared.

Most of the boys in need of clothing before they can attend school are in the 7- through 12-years age group. Clothing is also needed for little boys of pre-school age.

At the time the appeal was made, Family Service had 106 children in 18 families in need of apparel for fall. Most of these families were unusually large, including one with 11 children, leaving the parents with insufficient means for outfitting all of the youngsters.

Family Service was forced to make the appeal because fewer persons made their usual gifts of clothing to the agency this year. Shortages of clothes, plus the fact many items were donated last year for European relief, was blamed for the condition.

#### *Special article revealing the services rendered by one welfare department*

A glow of pride in accomplishment shines in the ranks of Chicago's Department of Public Welfare. It is because of results being obtained

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

in its new Division of Rehabilitation, a department whose object is to get people off relief.

The glow comes brighter every time some weary individual who had given up trying to get work because of handicaps steps out of the welfare office to take a job for which he or she is fitted.

This happens about 180 times each month. That often, men and women who would formerly have been labeled "unemployable" and put on the relief rolls are helped in one way or another to become self-supporting, it is reported by officials here.

### RELIEF ROLLS MOUNT

Even in boom times like the present, all big cities have their relief problem. There is always a residue of persons who, usually because of physical disability, believe they cannot earn a living. The number of unemployed in Chicago is relatively small now—25,000 as compared with 279,000 in 1939—but it has seemed irreducible at this point. In fact, the number has risen from the wartime low of 20,000 and is continuing to mount as the labor market becomes a little more selective.

In the past, it has been customary for cities to accept this burden without much questioning. Chicago, like most cities, had a placement service in its Department of Welfare which tried to find jobs for all, but which frankly gave up when the individual seemed to lack qualifications for any job available.

Last May this policy was changed. Alvin E. Rose, Commissioner of Welfare, set up a Rehabilitation Division whose object was to fit relief applicants for jobs. In addition to the usual placement service there was added professional counseling. This has called for additional staff and expenditure of funds, but Mr. Rose and his workers believe the service is more than paying for itself in the relief expenditures it is saving.

### PLACEMENT SOUGHT

It has always been the rule to require all who apply for relief to show that they have been unable to get a job through the services of the Illinois Employment Service. But there were many persons who could not get jobs in the ordinary way. Most of these persons had been told by their doctors they must not continue in their usual occupations, or had been incapacitated by some mishap or loss of faculty.

For them to become self-supporting again meant retraining—sometimes also mental reorientation.

The counselors working in the Rehabilitation Division of the Chicago Welfare Department look upon such cases not as unemployable but as job prospects. Their task is to find out what these individuals are capable of doing and to enable them to fill jobs calling for their type of ability.

To find out what each man can do takes professional skill. A man who can no longer do common labor may think he can do nothing else. The counselor gives him tests, talks to him about his hobbies, and discovers aptitudes the man himself perhaps didn't know he had. If he needs training in order to use his ability, the counselor arranges with some public agency, such as the Illinois State Division of Rehabilitation to give him what he needs. Or if through long idleness he has lost his work habits and his self-confidence, it may be necessary to place him for a time in the Welfare Department's Division of Vocational Therapy. The idea is to give him whatever he needs to enable him to hold a job after he gets it.

## DIRECTOR ENCOURAGED

Kurt Dreifuss, Director of Rehabilitation, is greatly encouraged by results. Some months ago a study was made of 120 counseling cases. It was found that all were persons listed as having a physical problem. Fifty-three were enabled to find jobs. The records of the 53 were reviewed three months after they had found employment. Ninety-five per cent were found still working, and off relief.

A typical case was that of a man who worked in a freight yard until told by his doctor he could not do hard outdoor work any longer. He lacked mechanical aptitude and could not get a job working a machine in a factory. When he came to apply for relief he thought his case was hopeless. But the counselor gave him tests and found out that while he could not perform jobs requiring manual dexterity, he could make simple packages quite acceptably. A job was found in this line, and he makes his own living.

Another man who had been on relief 12 years was retrained and is now earning his living making bobby pins.

## SAVING SHOWN

A widow with no vocational training was given aptitude tests and found to have marked ability mechanically. She was referred to the State agency which provides training in typing and fitted for an office job. Another woman, handicapped by deafness, was provided with a hearing aid and qualified to do the kind of work she wanted, caring for children in a home.

"When you figure that it costs about \$60 a month to maintain a family on relief, you can see how counseling saves the taxpayers' money," said Mr. Dreifuss. "Counseling takes much more time than placement, and is therefore more expensive. But unemployment is still more costly. When a man is placed in a job without study of his qualifications, he often returns to relief, and that means spending more than you would have spent for sound counseling."

The Welfare Department is giving study also to the problem of unemployment caused by alcoholism. Portal House, set up six months ago, somewhat along the lines of Alcoholics Anonymous, has enabled a number of drink addicts to become abstainers and once more self-supporting. Of 102 cases referred to Portal House, about 60 per cent have responded to treatment, according to Mr. Rose. But he reports financial difficulties in the way on continuing this work. This problem is now under study.

Whether present techniques of counseling could be continued in a period of mass unemployment is a matter debated in the Chicago welfare office. Mr. Dreifuss thinks intelligent placement work, with attention to the needs of the individual, would be more important then even than it is now. His own experience as a counselor during the depression, he said, convinced him that there are always jobs to be filled by those qualified.

*—Christian Science Monitor*

## 115. Sanitation and Drainage

The problem of adequate sewer lines and storm drainage is important in all cities regardless of size. Local government agencies handling these matters spend considerable tax money, and citizens should be interested in the services they receive for that money. To write understandable stories in these areas the

reporter must (a) understand what specific agencies are charged with the maintenance of sewer lines and drainage ditches; (b) understand how these services are financed, and (c) understand present conditions and needs for the future.

Sewerage system and storm drainage administration are often handled by a special sanitation district board. Sometimes drainage is placed in the hands of a separate drainage board. In cases where two cities are very close together a single sanitation district may suffice. The drainage district often cuts across city and county boundaries to tie together a geographical area in need of unified control.

What are the story possibilities arising from these services? Breakdown of the sewerage system provides news. The breakdown may indicate a need for new installations or poor maintenance. Complaints about services in various parts of the city require investigation of conditions and result in one or more stories. Personal inspection by the reporter, interviews with responsible officials, and interviews with persons making complaints will produce the stories. The health factor should not be overlooked. The effectiveness of sewer lines and drainage ditches is directly connected with health and sanitation of the city. Interviews with health officials will point up this important phase of the particular sewer problem. Action on bids for new sewer construction should be reported. Readers need to know what the new services will be and how much they will cost.

Reporters and newspapers can be of valuable service to their readers by giving them special stories explaining trash and garbage disposal systems. Not many readers stop to think what a big problem their small newspaper-wrapped bundle of garbage causes city officials. They don't know whether garbage disposal is being handled in the most economical and efficient manner in their city. Actually most cities use either the "open dump" system, the "landfill" system, or a method whereby garbage is pul-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

verized and treated chemically so that certain by-products result which the city sells.

The responsible reporter will not be satisfied to attend meetings of sanitation and drainage districts and report their actions. He will ask questions, investigate conditions, find out what neighboring cities are doing, make comparisons, and report his findings in special news stories.

In many newspapers the words "sewage" and "sewerage" are used interchangeably. Careful reporters will remember that "sewage" is the refuse matter carried through the pipes of a sewerage system."

### **SAMPLE LEADS**

#### *City Dumps*

Blankville officials expect to save taxpayers more than 20 per cent on refuse disposal costs through use of the sanitary landfill disposal method.

City Manager Trail T. Blazer reported today that eight open dumps operated by the city have been changed to landfill disposal grounds, thus eliminating odors, unsightliness, and rats.

#### *Interceptor Sewers*

Emergency housing at Blankville University has made necessary the immediate construction of at least part of the proposed new interceptor sewer line, trustees of the Blankville Sanitary District said today.

#### *Drainage Complaint*

Those most interested in profits and fees are the persons most active in the current storm drainage problem, Goodson A. Gold, drainage engineer, charged today in a letter to Alderman Foote Q. Pipestem.

## **116. Streets and Highways**

Street and highway news stories based on one or more of the following subjects contain considerable reader interest:



- a. Highway planning—safety features—modernization.
- b. Court suits to condemn property so that a right of way can be obtained.
- c. Conflicts between city, county, and state road agencies, overlapping responsibilities and authority.
- d. Reasons for delay in a street paving job.
- e. Completion date for a particular paving project or projects.
- f. Costs in connection with a particular project. The costs should be broken down into specific items as much as possible. Readers will want to know how much it will cost to move certain trees and other landmarks and to dig through hills.
- g. Bids on street or road improvement jobs. Readers want to know who made bids, how much they were, and who was awarded the contract.
- h. Opposition of property owners to a particular paving or street improvement project.
- i. Petitions of property owners for a particular paving job or street improvement project.
- j. Street lighting systems—proposals for changes in street lights—cost of maintenance of lights.
- k. Erection of new traffic signs or signals.
- l. Complaints about dangerous intersections and railroad crossings.

Stories of street and road improvements often tie in with city and county planning or with news of traffic control from the police department. All three of these matters are so related in the organization of city government that often stories about them will have to be checked with officials in all three areas.

Reporters should understand the administrative and court approval necessary to bring about street improvement in their city. For example, the following might be the required procedure: (a) petition by property owners for the improvement; (b) approval of the work by a board of local improvements (this might be the city council meeting as the board of improvements); (c)

passage of a city ordinance setting up the project; (d) a petition for county court approval of the project filed by the city attorney; and (e) filing of assessment rolls so that necessary steps can be taken to collect the money necessary for the project.

#### **EXAMPLE**

*Condemnation suits to pave way for highway right of way;  
suits explained*

Two condemnation suits will be sought in Blank County Court by the state highway department to complete purchase of the right of way for the four-and-one-half-mile widening and resurfacing of Route 99 from Oak Street to Blankville University airport.

One of the suits, against Oscar Leiderhorn, Coon Hollow, is being considered because the "price set on the right of way is too high," a highway department representative reported, and the second suit, described as "friendly litigation," is necessary to obtain right of way from the Maxwell Maxwell estate. The state has been unable to locate all of the heirs to this estate.

Right of way varying from 28 to 40 feet has been obtained along both sides of the project except in the case of these two properties, it was reported.

Total cost of the right of way to date has been in excess of \$25,000, according to the highway department. The Coon Hollow and Dry Gulch Railroad received approximately \$4,000 for 25 feet of right of way extending along the west side of the highway and a payment of \$4,500 has been made to O. U. Tightwad, owner of the Old Crabapple farm, north of Coon Hollow, for a right of way which will eliminate several large old trees fronting the property.

The suits for the condemnations will be filed through the attorney general's office sometime this fall, it was indicated, since highway engineers do not expect the highway paving to be completed south to the right of way in dispute until spring.

#### **117. News from the Township**

The amount and kind of news which you can expect from township government depends upon the responsibilities and

duties still retained by that unit of government in your state. Township officials in some states still have considerable responsibility, while those in others have gradually been squeezed between city and county to the point where they are not essential at all. Generally, the following news possibilities still exist at the seat of township government:

- a. Adoption of the annual budget
- b. Fixing of the tax rate for various funds
- c. Letting of contracts and approval of bids for township improvements.
- d. Reports of poor relief in the township.
- e. Township health and reports on vital statistics.
- f. Township road improvements.
- g. Activities of the justice of the peace and constables.

In some states, Indiana, for example, township and trustees help administer the schools. They also supervise the payment of damages to persons whose livestock is killed or wounded by dogs within the township, have the duty of destroying marijuana weeds in the township, and must provide fire protection where none exists.

In most stories of township activities the position of the township in the local government picture needs to be clarified for the reader. He has trouble distinguishing between township, city, and county, particularly when all three often engage in the same governmental activity. Reporters covering this governmental activity should understand thoroughly the duties and responsibilities of township officials.

## **118. Special Districts**

Special districts to provide specific governmental services are sometimes superimposed upon the major governmental unit. When funds are not available from a major governmental unit like the city or county for a specific local need, a district is

formed and citizens in the area are assessed to meet the need. If a particular geographical area has certain drainage problems, the area is designated a drainage district. Persons living within that area are assessed to raise funds for a drainage system. Other special districts are: road and bridge, public health or sanitary, park, flood prevention, lighting, school, library, and public utility. Other districts are organized for the election of legislative, administrative, and judicial officials. These are called "election districts." They generally consist of state senatorial districts, state representative districts, court districts, and congressional and senatorial districts.

News from the special district consists almost entirely of the services rendered by the districts and the fund-raising activities necessary to pay for the services. Districts generally are administered by district boards or boards of trustees, supervisors, or commissioners. These boards are in turn supervised by, or held accountable to, either the county or municipal legislative body.

Reporters should understand the purposes for which the districts were organized, the problems involved in carrying out those purposes, funds necessary, and status of improvements in the district.

## **119. Schools and School Districts**

If reporters covering administrative and teaching activities in the public schools were as inquisitive as those covering school sports, possibly the achievements and shortcomings of the schools would be better understood by the public. The inquisitiveness is best developed by the general reporter learning his job as thoroughly as the sports reporter knows his. He should know (a) school organization in his county; (b) duties and responsibilities of school officials; (c) time of release of regular reports of school activities; (d) activities of special committees; (e) educational goals; (f) teaching methods; (g) extracurricular

activities; (h) undesirable conditions; (i) budget and personnel problems; (j) building needs; and (k) future plans.

In school reporting the newsman is likely to overlook the obvious. He waits around on his school beat for "something to happen." As a matter of fact something "happens" every day of the year, if he has the news "eye" to see it. What goes on in the classroom is tremendously important to parents. Teachers' work with physically and emotionally handicapped children is important. New textbooks and teaching methods are important and can be presented dramatically.

The new reporter on the "education" beat must begin his understanding of his job by learning routine coverage of the school board. The board undoubtedly will be his most important news source, for the board hires and fires, considers budgets, receives financial statements, and serves as a policy-making group for the schools it controls. Board meetings are run in much the same way as those of the city council, and the reporter on the school run must learn when to hold back stories and when to go ahead. The school board produces a lot of routine copy, but it should not be handled in a routine manner. If the reporter has a thorough understanding of school organization and problems in his community, a sense of responsibility, and an interest in school affairs, he can background the routine news to make it more informative, interesting, and readable. To do this, however, he will have to work at the job—and ask a lot of questions.

To summarize school reporting:

a. The board is the most important single news source for routine stories which should be interpreted for the reader.

b. For unroutine news, news of what happens in the classrooms, laboratories, and on the playgrounds, the reporter must interview principals, teachers, and students. This type of news also should be interpreted for the reader.

School organization varies from community to community and from state to state. The school with a principal at its head is the

basic unit. Schools are grouped into school districts, often with a district board or district superintendent in charge. The school districts in turn are organized within the county with a county superintendent and school board responsible for administrative and executive activities. In many states some of the administrative and executive responsibility is handled at the township level under a township supervisor or trustee. Often cities and towns are organized as "independent" districts and rural areas set up as "consolidated" districts. The trend in most states is toward the consolidation of one-room school districts and small rural districts into single districts with one large, modern school. Illinois, for example, has consolidated from approximately 11,000 districts into fewer than 3,000. The eventual goal is around 2,000. The consolidation movements everywhere are made complex by problems of finance, personnel, local pride, and personal prejudices. There must be special elections, bond issues, and assessments. All of these matters need careful treatment by the reporter. They must be explained, interpreted, and evaluated.

#### **EXAMPLE**

##### *Special education services defined and explained for parents*

"Educate all the children of the district."

That is the theory of the Blankville schools, and with little fanfare and practically no expense to the district, one of the state's outstanding special education programs has been developed here.

Rated on a par with the special education programs of the Blue-town and Deepford schools, Blankville annually handles some 200 children, giving them instruction to fit their particular handicaps.

Any number of circumstances can contribute toward making a child just a bit different from his playmates. It may be poor eyesight, defective speech, deafness, or inability to learn. Whatever the child's defect, there is a place in the Blankville education program for him.

For problem children and the socially maladjusted, Blankville has a full-time counselor and a social worker. For the homebound crippled, those children unable to get to school, there is a teacher to

go into their homes. For the slow-learning there are special rooms where they can be given extra instruction.

The state reimburses the Blankville district for all the money it spends in educating the handicapped children, thus the only real expense is in maintaining the rooms. The program is not limited to youngsters in this district, but wherever there is room in the classes, children are accepted from surrounding communities. Classes which now have out-of-town children enrolled give instruction to the deaf and the hard of hearing and in sight saving.

Largest enrollment is in speech correction with approximately 150 in these classes this year. Miss Martha Raysor and Miss Dorothy Timson, Piedmont school, are instructors. Objectives of this program are to discover the child with a speech difficulty, give lip-reading instruction to the hard of hearing, recommend medical attention in cases where it will be beneficial, and to provide constructive educational assistance to those children needing it.

Largest demand is for slow-learning classes. Thirty-eight are enrolled this year and there is a waiting list. School officials are hoping that another room can be added next year. There are three rooms at the various levels for these pupils. Miss Joan Nightingale teaches in Junior High, Miss Ada Troy has intermediate children, and Miss Pearl Rae teaches the primary department.

Purpose of the classes is to present the type of training that will make these pupils law-abiding and self-supporting citizens. A 14-year-old boy, for example, who lacks judgment and reasoning is impressed with the importance of habit. "Habits of being punctual, getting along with one's fellow men, doing as one is told to do, and of being neat and orderly are real assets in getting and holding a job," Miss Rae asserts.

She points out that the slow-learning child will not need a lengthy education to enable him to follow his chosen vocation. "He will need," she says, "good health and physical strength to endure the heavy labors, these in addition to good habits."

The hard-of-hearing child is not kept permanently in special classes, but is returned to the regular classes wherever he is capable of competing. Remedial reading, spelling, and speech correction are the major subjects in which individual tutoring is needed. A boy or girl who can't hear everything that's said in a classroom soon falls behind in his grades. Pupils who fail are given hearing tests and if necessary they are given special attention in the hard-of-hearing room.

A deaf child's education is mainly speech development. This is administered chiefly in the primary grades where six years are required to pass through three grades in order to get thorough speech development. Fifty per cent of the school day is devoted to speech development. Other time is spent on lip reading, language and reading, and art and gym work.

Four homebound children are getting instruction this year from Mrs. Leona Sniffle. This special education gives handicapped children their academic training and as much as possible they are made to feel that they belong to the school.

The socially maladjusted or problem children come under the province of Miss Judith Psychic, counselor, and Miss Lorna Smith, social worker. The number varies each year, but this year approximately 150 children will have received assistance.

## **120. County Supervisors, Trustees, or Commissioners**

Rules for reporting meetings of the county commission are about the same as those suggested for covering meetings of city councils. (See Section 110.) You should avoid the use of "county building" terminology and include enough background to "bring the reader up to date" in every story. Story possibilities are indicated by the following general functions of many county legislative groups:

- a. Control, supervise, and maintain county property (court-house, hospitals, jails, etc.).
- b. Accept bids and authorize contracts with the county.
- c. Supervise construction and maintain roads and bridges.
- d. Audit and authorize claims against the county.
- e. Exercise the county's power of eminent domain.
- f. Perform certain election functions, including the establishment of precincts and the providing of polling places and necessary equipment.
- g. Appoint county officials as authorized by law, including the filling of vacancies in case of death or disqualification of certain elective officers.



- h. Establish drainage projects.
- i. Prepare the annual budget for the county.
- j. Authorize changes in township boundaries.
- k. Fill vacancies in township offices.
- l. Issue bonds or notes in connection with the borrowing of money for the county.
- m. Designate certain banks as depositories of county funds.
- n. Grant licenses or franchises with respect to the use of county property.
- o. Authorize payment of specified bounties and rewards for arrests.
- p. Purchase lands in the county for the establishment of public parks.
- q. Set the tax rate and impose the tax levy.
- r. Pass the necessary appropriations ordinances.

Like the city council, the county commission receives many petitions and complaints from citizens. These make news. Conflicts between petitioners and commissioners, or between the members of the commission themselves, make news, but the reporter should not overplay the conflict to make his story interesting.

In county government the meetings of the major county governing body often provide only routine news. For "unroutine" news, therefore, the reporter covering the county building should know the duties and powers of all county officers, the number and functions of county departments, and the number and functions of special boards and commissions. Most counties have a county auditor, county recorder, county clerk, county surveyor, county sheriff, county judge, county prosecuting attorney, county coroner, county assessor, county tax collector, county superintendent of schools, county agricultural agent, county physician, county purchasing agent, and a county health officer.

It is part of the responsibility of the reporter to help narrow

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

the gap between "we" and "they." Activities of the county commission must not be thought of as either foolish or diabolical steps taken by "they" to curb the freedom of the citizens. The reader must be made to feel that "they" includes himself. This can be done by

- a. Quoting government officials, "putting people into the news."

- b. Explaining new laws and county commission actions in the language of the people.

- c. Breaking local government down so that the reader sees his responsibilities, his returns for his vote and his tax dollar, and local needs.

Meetings of standing and special committees and boards appointed by the county commission are often as important as meetings of the commission itself. When these meetings are not public, "pipe lines" of the reporter are useful in getting at the news. The reporter may expect to find some of the following boards and commissions functioning in his county:

- a. Board of Review—a board appointed to review the assessment list of the county.

- b. Ways and Means Committee—appointed to set up the county budget.

- c. Fees and Salaries Committee—appointed to make recommendations concerning fees and salaries of county officials.

- d. Election Board—appointed to canvass elections as well as prepare ballots and appoint election officials.

- e. Board of Education—appointed to provide textbooks and consider requirements of school and school property.

- f. Department of Public Welfare—appointed to provide old age assistance, assistance to dependent children, services to handicapped persons, and commitment to hospitals of persons financially unable to pay their way.

- g. Tavern and Dance Hall Committee (Alcoholic Beverage Board or Liquor Commission)—appointed to check and pass

upon all applications for tavern and dance hall licenses and licenses to sell alcoholic beverages within the county.

h. County Planning Commission—appointed to make plans and recommendations for long-range public works programs. The Commission works outside of incorporated areas.

i. War Memorial Committee—appointed to make plans and supervise the building of war memorials.

j. Hospital trustees—appointed to supervise the running of county hospitals.

k. Roads and Bridges Committee—appointed to make plans for and supervise the building and maintenance of county roads.

l. Library Board—appointed to provide library services for the unincorporated areas of the county.

Many of these boards and committees are appointed by the county commission, others are appointed by the judge of the circuit court, and in some counties the officials are elected by county voters.

### **EXAMPLE**

A raise in the salary of the Blankville County sheriff from \$2,600 to \$3,500 will be recommended to the ways and means committee of the county board of supervisors Thursday in its prebudget session.

The proposed raise was unofficially reported Tuesday afternoon following a meeting of the fees and salaries committee.

Also submitted to the committee, and reportedly approved, was a request for a raise of approximately 20 per cent in salaries of court-house janitors and maintenance employees.

Chairman Oswald P. Zechariah of the fees and salaries committee declined to divulge the actions of his committee pending action of the ways and means committee Thursday. That committee, headed by Supervisor White Z. Redhead, will consider the tentative budget for 1948-49.

The fees and salaries committee met in a one-and-one-half-hour session Tuesday afternoon to consider the salaries of all elective officials who will be named in the fall balloting. Offices in which salary changes could be made effective with the new terms are County

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Treasurer, County Clerk, County Judge, and County Superintendent of Schools.

State law prohibits a change in salary for officials in fee offices which would become effective during a current term of office.

Also reported considered by the committee was a suggestion for a raise of approximately 25 per cent in the salaries of sheriff's deputies. The suggested changes were a raise to \$250 per month from \$200 for the chief deputy, \$200 from \$150 for other deputies, and a 25 per cent increase for the office deputy.

Increases in the county budget will be necessary for the coming year, supervisors have admitted, although a majority of board members have declared themselves in favor of a "pegged levy" at or near the level of 1945 of \$336,000.

### **121. Terminology**

**AGENDA** A list of the items of business to be taken up by a council, commission, board, or committee.

**AMENDMENT** An addition to an ordinance, bill, or motion that changes the original proposal. The change may be brought about by items being added or by additional wording that clarifies or changes the interpretation of the original proposal.

**CITY MANAGER PLAN** Under the *city manager* plan of city government, a city manager is hired by the city council to manage the affairs of the city just as a general manager might be hired by the board of directors to run a corporation. He is hired for his expert knowledge of how to run a city. The city might also have

a mayor but his job is to run the city council meetings and preside at official functions.

**COMMISSION PLAN** Under the *commission* plan of city government voters elect a number of commissioners who head various city departments. A mayor is elected to serve as the administrative head of the city and run city commission meetings. The commissioners hold such jobs as Commissioner of Public Safety, Commissioner of Finance, etc.

**EARMARKED FUNDS** Money set aside for a particular purpose.

**EMINENT DOMAIN** Power of the government to take private property when it is needed for a public purpose. The owner must be paid a fair price for property taken under this power.

**ENABLING LAW** Often refers to legislation giving cities the opportunity of turning to the city-manager type of government. In general it is legislation that opens the gates for further action.

**FEE OFFICES** Offices where officials are paid out of fees collected by the office. Excess earnings are paid to the city, county, or state.

**FRANCHISE** A particular privilege or right granted by a legislative body to a person or company. A city, for example, grants one company the right to operate buses within the city limits. The same right is not granted to another concern.

**FREEHOLDERS** Refers to property holders, citizens of the city, county, or state who own real estate. A city ordinance might read that a petition signed by 300 freeholders must be presented to the city council before the body will consider a street-paving project.

**INCORPORATED AREA** Geographical area occupied by an incorporated city. Unincorporated areas are those areas of the county that lie outside the city limits of all cities of the county.

**INCUMBENTS** Those persons holding office. In an election the person running for reelection is the incumbent.

**INDIGENTS** Those persons in need of aid. Poor persons being cared for by a welfare agency.

**MAYOR-COUNCIL PLAN** Under the mayor-council form of city government the mayor and councilmen, or aldermen, are elected by the voters to serve in executive and legislative capacities. They are like the governor and the legislators of the state. The mayor appoints persons to head city departments, such appointments being first approved by the council. In a "strong" mayor system the council often is a "rubber-stamp" group.

**PEGGED LEVY** A tax levy that does not change. When council members speak of a "pegged levy," they mean a levy that is the same as the levy of the preceding budget period.

**PLATS and RE-PLATS** If a private citizen, or a real estate concern, decides to build a new residential area, a "plat," or map, of the area must be approved by the planning board. If at a later date the same area is "re-platted," this also must be approved. Approval of the planning group is necessary to insure that adequate provision has been made for city streets and that zoning, planning, and building restrictions are being observed.

**PROPERTY** For general tax purposes property is divided into real and personal. Real property consists of real estate and improvements erected on it. Personal property is either tangible or intangible. Tangible personal property can be readily seen, such as an automobile, jewels, or farm animals. Intangible personal property might be bonds or stocks kept locked in a strongbox and therefore hidden from the tax assessor.

**READING OF AN ORDINANCE** Proposed ordinances usually get three "readings." The proposal is read by title the first time and then referred to a committee for the second reading. At the third reading the final vote is taken. The third reading comes after the proposal has been "reported back" by the committee to which it was referred.

**REFERENDUM** A direct popular vote on a proposed measure. In a city, for example, the question of daylight-saving time might be referred to the voters before the city council does anything about an ordinance on the matter.

**SPECIAL ASSESSMENT TAXATION** When a street needs paving, part of the cost is borne by property owners along the street. The cost is equally divided or the owners pay a specified sum

for each foot of property they own along the street. The money is collected as a "special assessment."

**SPECIAL LEGISLATION** Laws that apply only to a certain city, county, or township. Such laws passed by city councils often apply only to one organization or one business.

**TABLE A PROPOSAL** When a proposed ordinance is "tabled," it ceases to move through the legislative process. The proposal may be "tabled" indefinitely or for a specified time while investigations are made.

**TAX ALLOCATIONS** Gasoline tax money, for example, in many states is collected by the state as a state tax. Then, part of the money is "allocated" or assigned to cities for street improvements.

**TAX DELINQUENCY** Periodically lists of real estate on which taxes have not been paid are compiled for posting and offering of the property for sale.

**VALUATION, ACTUAL AND ASSESSED** For tax purposes the assessed valuation of a house might be set at 75 per cent of the actual valuation. The actual valuation is usually set at a low figure, however. Actual value does not mean what the house cost to

build. A house that cost \$25,000 to build might be listed at only \$10,000. The assessed valuation would be 75 per cent of the \$10,000.

**WARRANT** Official papers which give someone authority to pay out city or county funds. As far as the person having the warrant is concerned, the paper has the same power as a check. He presents it at the bank for pay-

ment, or uses it in the same manner that he might use a check. Warrants are drawn by the auditor for payment of goods or services.

**ZONING** Zoning ordinances usually divide the city into residential, business, and manufacturing areas. Such laws, therefore, would prohibit the establishment of a business in a zone reserved for residences.

## **122. Your Local Government Organization**

A. City of \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE	OFFICEHOLDER	TELE. NO.
--------	--------------	-----------

Mayor	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

Council or Commission	_____	_____
--------------------------	-------	-------

Meets:	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Chief of Police	_____	_____
-----------------	-------	-------

Fire Chief	_____	_____
------------	-------	-------

City Manager	_____	_____
--------------	-------	-------

City Clerk	_____	_____
------------	-------	-------



*Reporting Local Government*

OFFICE

OFFICEHOLDER

TELE. NO.

---

City Treasurer

---

City Engineer

---

City Attorney

---

City Judge

---

Assessor

---

Health Officer

---

Board of Health

---

City Park Board

---

Purchasing Agent

---

City Electrician

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

OFFICE

OFFICEHOLDER

TELE. NO.

---

Plumbing Inspector

---

Supt. of Building  
Construction

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**DEPARTMENTS**

**HEAD**

**MEMBERS**

---

Aviation

---

---

---

Finance

---

---

---

Health

---

---

---

Law

---

---

---

Parks

---

---

---

Planning  
Commission

---

---

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

DEPARTMENTS

HEAD

MEMBERS

---

Public Utilities

---

---

---

Public Works

---

---

---

Safety

---

---

---

Sanitation

---

---

---

Welfare

---

---

---

B. County of \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE	OFFICEHOLDER	TELE. NO.
--------	--------------	-----------

County Judge		
--------------	--	--

County Sheriff		
----------------	--	--

County Clerk		
--------------	--	--

County Assessor		
-----------------	--	--

Tax Collector		
---------------	--	--

County Surveyor		
-----------------	--	--

County Attorney		
-----------------	--	--

Coroner		
---------	--	--

County Recorder		
-----------------	--	--

Supt. of Schools		
------------------	--	--

Supt. of Highways		
-------------------	--	--

Prosecuting Attorney		
-------------------------	--	--

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

OFFICE	OFFICEHOLDER	TELE. NO.
--------	--------------	-----------

Veterinarian		
--------------	--	--

Probation Officer		
-------------------	--	--

County Auditor		
----------------	--	--

Treasurer		
-----------	--	--

Agricultural Agent		
--------------------	--	--

Home Demonstration Agent		
-----------------------------	--	--

Public Health Nurse		
---------------------	--	--

County Engineer		
-----------------	--	--

Welfare Director		
------------------	--	--

Justices of the Peace		
--------------------------	--	--

County Commissioners, Trustees, or Supervisors		
--	--	--

Meet:		
-------	--	--

*Reporting Local Government*

**BOARDS**

**CHAIRMAN**

**MEMBERS**

---

Board of Review

---

---

---

Public Welfare  
Board

---

---

---

Board of  
Education

---

---

---

Library Board

---

---

---

Board of  
Canvassers

---

---

---

County Hospital  
Trustees

---

---

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

BOARDS

CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS

---

Jury Commissioners

---

---

---

Board of Finance

---

---

---

Election  
Commissioners

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



*Reporting Local Government*

C. \_\_\_\_\_ Township

OFFICE

OFFICEHOLDER

TELE. NO.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Township Assessor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Town Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Township Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board of Trustees

Meet: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_ City Schools

OFFICE

OFFICEHOLDER

TELE. NO.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attendance  
Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principals

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

E. \_\_\_\_\_ County Schools

OFFICE	OFFICEHOLDER	TELE. NO.
--------	--------------	-----------

Superintendent		
----------------	--	--

Attendance Officer		
--------------------	--	--

Principals		
------------	--	--



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Interpreting the Courts*

123. Pre-Trial Stories	344
124. Trial Stories	347
125. Stories of Court Verdicts and Decisions	351
126. Appellate Court Decisions	354
127. Inquests	358
128. Grand Juries	362
129. Handling Stories of Divorce	364
130. Contempt of Court	367
131. Terminology	369
132. Your Local Courts	376

Despite the importance of our court system in the legislative, executive, and judicial triumvirate, too many Americans look at the courts with awe, fear, or contempt. Too many of them find court proceedings mysterious and the courtroom only a place where bad persons are punished. Too many of them think that "nice people" never get involved in "court scrapes." They shun jury duty and shy away from bringing charges against wrongdoers. Such civic duties they leave to the courthouse "hangers-on."

Many of these misconceptions prevail either because of sensational reporting of trials or court stories so loaded with legal terminology that they are not understood. These faults are not the reporter's alone. They also stem from jurists who misuse publicity and those who hide the real significance of the law behind dust storms of unintelligible phrases. Real understanding of judicial processes calls for more "plain talk."

### **123. Pre-Trial Stories**

Pre-trial stories are based on complaints, charges, arrests, and the filing of legal papers in lawsuits. Usually at this stage there is no privilege attached to what you write. You cannot say that a person has been charged with a crime until he is actually under arrest for it. Because he has been taken to the police station for questioning this does not mean that he is under arrest. Just because a warrant has been issued this still does not give you the authority to say that a person has been arrested. The warrant must be served first. You can say that a warrant has been

issued for the arrest of Mr. Blank. You can say that he is being held for questioning. In such cases the reporter must be extremely careful to report exactly what happened. He should not include in his story predictions, theories, or suspicions of police officials or public prosecutors.

Pre-trial stories should contain the following information:

*Stories involving crime.* (a) name and complete identification of person or persons involved in the complaint or warrant; (b) exact nature of the crime or misdemeanor committed; (c) police action; (d) arraignment; (e) amount of bond required; (f) date of trial; (g) principals out on bond or in jail, and (h) feature angle. For more detailed instructions see Chapter Five, Crime in the News.

In connection with the practice of printing prison records of persons arrested the Detroit (Mich.) *News* cautions its reporters as follows:

The practice of printing the prison record of a man arrested in connection with the commission of a crime but not convicted of the crime is discouraged: Often former inmates of prison, striving to lead decent lives, are brought in by police on suspicion. To print their names may be to injure them needlessly without imparting valuable information to readers.

*Stories involving civil actions.* (a) names and complete identification of persons named in civil suits; (b) exact nature of the legal action taken, including both complaints and answers; (c) damages sought; (d) background facts; (e) reason for the suit as set forth in the legal papers filed; (f) names of lawyers handling the case; (g) specific designation of courts involved in the suit—names of judges; (h) is a jury trial requested in the complaint?; (i) effect of the legal action requested, and (j) feature angle.

**Caution:** Lawsuits are started or begun, not filed. Affidavits, complaints, petitions, and other legal papers are filed. Do not

say that a person is a forger, thief, murderer, or any kind of criminal until he has been found guilty. Such terms should not be used in either the pre-trial story or the story of the court trial itself.

*Stories concerning bequests.* (a) legal action taken; (b) value of the estate; (c) names of the persons taking the legal action; (d) name of the deceased and date of death; (e) how the estate is to be divided; (f) names of persons provided for in the will; (g) name of person appointed administrator or administratrix; (h) amount of bond required for administrator or administratrix, and (i) unusual features of the will.

**Caution:** Estates or money are bequested, not the person or organization named as the beneficiary. For example, you should not write, "Walter E. Thistlewhistle was bequeathed an estate valued at \$10,000." You can say, "An estate valued at \$10,000 was bequested to Walter E. Thistlewhistle." To avoid the possibility of this error and to get away from the words "bequeathed" and "bequested," however, the following kinds of leads are suggested:

### *Will filed*

The will of the late Judge Foster Z. Sox filed Wednesday with the county clerk disposes of an estate of \$70,000.

### *Administrator appointed*

Dubois M. Fontaine was appointed Friday as administrator of the estate of his father, Charles Fontaine, who died on Aug 10 at Bellbuckle. He left personal property valued at \$1,200 and real estate valued at \$40,000.

The reporter must also use good taste and good judgment in his selection of material from a will that indicates the deceased's dislike for certain persons. He should not use parts of a will that might cause embarrassment to certain heirs when by using more

direct quotes from the will he can eliminate the unkind impressions. For example, part of the story might read:

The will specifies that should the estate go into trusteeship the trustees should have complete discretion whether Constantine (a son) shall be qualified to take over the estate after his twenty-fifth birthday.

The trustees would have to decide whether he had sufficient "thrif, prudence, and good business management" to handle the estate.

Professor Fontainbleu (the deceased) explains the provision in the will by saying that it was his earnest wish that his son prove to be a trustworthy and prudent businessman and that the will not reflect on him but serve simply as a safeguard against improvidence. He hoped that it would also serve as an inducement for Constantine to prove himself worthy of the responsibility of handling whatever estate he might fall heir to.

Without the qualifying effects of the last paragraph the first two paragraphs quoted above might have caused considerable embarrassment to a son whom a father was attempting to protect in his will.

**Remember:** The person named in a will to settle an estate, if a man, is called the executor, and if a woman, is called an executrix. If the deceased failed to leave a will, the probate court is petitioned to appoint either an administrator or an administratrix to administer the estate.

**Caution:** In all pre-trial stories the reporter must beware of "overdone" humor. The victim of a purse snatch or of a holdup will not be amused by a description of his fright during the incident. Humor and general feature treatment will add interest and readability to a pre-trial story, but they should not be used if someone must suffer needless embarrassment.

## **124. Trial Stories**

Courts assume that a man is innocent until he is proved guilty. The court reporter must assume the same thing and not allow

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

attorneys and other persons concerned with a case to try it in the newspaper. Nor should the reporter prejudice readers against the defendant or defendants by sensational reporting. To a certain extent he should strive to give his readers the same impressions concerning a court trial that were received by persons in the courtroom.

Generally, trial stories should contain (a) names and identification of principals in the trial; (b) correct identification of the court having jurisdiction over the case; (c) summary to indicate the exact point reached in the trial at the time the story was written; (d) background facts to refresh the reader on what has gone before; (e) important testimony given; (f) witnesses to be heard or legal steps to be taken the next day; (g) courtroom impressions; and (h) significance of the trial.

*Leads* should (a) indicate the latest move in the trial; (b) play up important testimony; (c) play up a feature angle.

### *Indicate latest move*

WASHINGTON, May 28—(AP)—Judge T. Alan Goldsborough today postponed until June 10 a legal battle between the government and three railroad unions over whether a ban against a threatened rail strike should be continued.

### *Play up important testimony*

A leader of the striking Blankville carpenters said in court today that documents sent from union headquarters were "just guides and darn good advice, not something we had to follow."

### *Play up feature angle*

An 8-month-old chinchilla, valued at about \$1,000, was "put on the stand" in Circuit Court yesterday to back up testimony of its owner, Chinchilla Company, defendant in a breach of contract suit.

*Testimony* can be handled by (a) summary or paraphrase of statements; (b) indirect quoting of questions and answers, or



(c) direct quoting of questions and answers. In cases where both sides have been presented to the court the reporter should include the statements of both sides in his news story.

*Summary or paraphrase*

The plaintiff contended that the company violated its sales contract by selling him inbred chinchillas, which produced an offspring with a foot deformity.

The defense held that the deformity was caused by an accident, perhaps when the mother bit the foot. A veterinarian testified for the chinchilla firm that "controlled" inbreeding of purebred stock was an accepted procedure in animal raising. He also stated that in his opinion the deformity was caused by an accident and not inbreeding.

*Indirect quoting of questions and answers*

Earlier Woodrow Cane, another union witness, testified he told Blankville newspaper publishers the Taft-Hartley Act allows them to reject a job applicant because of race, religion, or kind of clothing.

Jones promptly accused Cane of proposing "excuses" by which publishers could get out of hiring nonunion men.

Cane denied this. He said he was only making an observation to show "the wrongness of the law."

He said Congress prohibited discrimination against nonunion men when it should have been prohibiting discrimination against people for racial or religious reasons.

Cane was asked what would happen if a newspaper hired a non-union printer.

He replied that if anything occurred through no fault of the publisher—that is, if the publisher were forced by law to hire a nonunion man—"we'd be darned fools to upset the applecart."

*Direct quoting of questions and answers*

Fortescue showed him a stack of comic books, most of them more violent than funny, and asked if he had read them.

A. Yes. I looked at comic books even before I could read.

Q. How often did you go to the movies?

A. Every time I got the money. About three times a week.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Q. What kind did you like best?

A. Murder and mystery.

Q. What were they about?

A. Oh, shooting, drowning, poisoning, and strangling.

Q. Did they have any effect after you went to sleep?

A. Yes, I always dreamed about them.

*Background to refresh readers' minds* is necessary for the reader to bridge the gap between yesterday's story and today's. Background material is most often needed in the body of the news story somewhere between the lead and the beginning of the current day's news account. This technique bridges the gap between the new facts in the lead and the expansion of those facts. For example:

A leader of the striking Blankville carpenters said in court today that documents sent from union headquarters were "just guides and darn good advice, not something we had to follow."

The witness: Jasper Longfellow, chairman of the wage committee of the Blankville carpenter's local.

The case: a government attempt to get a Federal Court injunction against the union and its national officers. Government lawyers are trying to show that local unions must follow the policies of the national office, and that those policies are illegal.

Longfellow gave his account, etc.

*Explanation of legal phrases* can be handled by (a) use of the phrases in such a way that the meaning is clear; (b) definition or explanation of the phrases in the story, or (c) substitution of simpler terms for the hard-to-understand phrases. For example:

*How term "advisory jury" is explained by one reporter*

An "advisory jury" would be empanelled as the first move, using the regular federal court list of jurors.

When the trial itself begins, the jury will set only as advisers of the judge. At conclusion of the trial, the jury will retire and return with a verdict in the usual way—except that Judge Bottomley could reject the finding, adopt only part of it, or throw it out entirely.

*Word "contempt" used so that it is understandable*

They all are accused of contempt, a criminal charge, for refusing to tell the House committee whether they are, or ever were, members of the Communist party.

*Explanation of "contempt of court" by substituting other words for the legal ones*

Lewis' coal miners quit work March 15. They haven't been back since. On April 3 a federal judge told them to go back to work for at least 10 days. They ignored the order.

Why? That's the pretty question Lewis and his lawyers will have to answer Monday for a federal judge. Suppose the judge doesn't like the answer? He can fine Lewis and his union any amount and even jail Lewis.

**Caution:** Check yourself on the following: (a) There are several kinds of federal courts and judges. The first time you refer to the court be specific. Don't say that such and such happened in federal court today. Write it, "United States district court" or "United States Circuit Court of Appeals." (b) A defendant pleads guilty *of* a crime. He pleads guilty *to* a charge. He does not plead guilty *to* a crime or guilty *of* a charge. (c) Privilege applies only to what is said in court and admitted to the record. Beware of testimony which the judge rules against. Do not comment on a court case. That destroys the privilege.

## **125. Stories of Court Verdicts and Decisions**

The essential element of a story involving a court decision or verdict handed down by a jury is the decision, or the verdict, itself. But the decision or verdict will not be clear unless the reporter explains "how it got that way." Concerning jury decisions the reader will want to know

a. How long the jury was out. There is drama in either a quick decision by jury members or a long fight and many ballots.

b. What the verdict means in simple English. This usually involves an explanation of the charge or charges on which the defendant was tried.

c. If the jury made any recommendations concerning a sentence. Did the members recommend leniency?

d. If the defendant was convicted on all counts charged by the state.

e. What sentence or sentences are possible according to law.

f. If defense lawyers will appeal the case. Did the judge defer sentence to allow for an appeal?

g. What were the main points the prosecuting attorney used to get a conviction. The reader would like to have a summary of the high points in the state's case.

h. What were the main points used by the defense. Give the reader a summary of the high points used by the defense.

i. The names and full identification of persons involved in the case—judge, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and the defendant or defendants.

In cases where the defendant pleads guilty the reader should be told (a) the nature of the plea—did the defendant ask for the mercy of the court; (b) if sentence was passed by the judge or deferred until a later date; (c) what the judge said when he passed sentence; (d) the nature of the charge against the defendant; and (e) whether the sentence was heavy or light in accordance with provisions of the law.

**Caution:** The terms “guilty” and “innocent” are less dangerous than “guilty” and “not guilty” in reporting court verdicts. If, because of a typographical error, the “not” is left out of the “not guilty” verdict, the defendant will suffer and a libel suit may result.

#### **COURT ORDERS AND DECISIONS**

Court orders and petitions for court orders must be explained in simple terms so that the reader can understand the basic is-

sues. The petitions and orders must be stripped of their legal clothing for the benefit of the man in the street. The usual procedure prior to the issuing of a court order goes something like this: A complaint is filed concerning an act or acts that someone considers unlawful. If the act or acts continue, a court may be asked to order them stopped. The order can be issued immediately by the judge or he can hold a hearing first. After the hearing, if he issues the order, the acts must cease or the persons committing them can be cited for contempt of court. A citizen may go into court to ask for an order to force someone to comply with a certain provision of a law. The reporter must find out what that provision is and explain exactly what it is the citizen wants done.

The following leads are built around what the court order is trying to bring about, or prevent.

## BRING RECORDS TO COURT

Donald E. Duckling, Blankville attorney, was ordered by Circuit Judge Karl O. Marcks of Dooley County to furnish an inventory of the Bon Mot Catering Company and permit a receiver to inspect the property, or go to jail.

## PETITION FOR UMPIRE

WASHINGTON, March 20—(AP)—Coal operators today asked the federal district court to name an umpire for the miners' pension dispute that has caused a nation-wide coal strike.

The court petition sought appointment of a neutral member of a three-man board which administers a \$30,000,000 pension trust fund.

## GOVERNMENT PETITION DENIED

Federal Judge Caesar Fountain yesterday denied a petition by the U.S. Government to revoke citizenship of Foster P. Ziemer, former German citizen who received his naturalization papers at Blankville in 1929.

## JUDGE RULES AGAINST MOTHER

LOS ANGELES, April 8—(AP)—A mother convicted of beating her 2-year-old daughter to death was barred today from ever again seeing her month-old son.

A news story of a court order just issued should contain (a) what the order says; (b) what the order means; (c) why the order was issued; (d) what those who opposed the order said in court; (e) what those who favored the order said in court; (f) what the judge said when he issued the order; and (g) explanation of the legal steps leading up to the issuing of the order.

## 126. Appellate Court Decisions

*a. Summary leads.* All too often reporters covering state and United States Supreme Court decisions slap a summary lead on a leaning tower of quoted paragraphs from the judges' decision. The structure is rickety and top-heavy because the reader understands little beyond the lead. The reader needs to be told in clear language what the decision means, how it will affect his way of life. He will be interested in the following:

### THIRD PARTY UPHELD

SPRINGFIELD, April 7—(AP)—The Progressive party today was declared an established party in Cook County by the Illinois Supreme Court.

### SUIT DISMISSED

The state supreme court yesterday dismissed a \$100,000 libel suit brought by Carl A. Clean, Blankville restaurant owner, against the Blankville Clarion.

### LAW DECLARED ILLEGAL

WASHINGTON—(AP)—A New York law that bans the sale of publications devoted principally to stories of bloodshed, lust, and crime Monday was held unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

## REHEARING DENIED

The state supreme court today denied a rehearing of the case involving legality of a proposed new Blankville city charter.

## DEFENDANTS' RIGHTS UPHELD

The state supreme court yesterday said Illinois courts must tell any defendant accused of a felony that he has a right to have a lawyer.

## RENO DIVORCES OUTLAWED

SALEM, Ore.—(AP)—The Oregon Supreme Court has ruled out the Reno divorce for Oregon residents.

*b. What the decision means.* The reader often can be told in one or two paragraphs what the decision means. For example, the reporter might write: "As a result of the high court's ruling, a special election set for March 24 had to be canceled." Or he might explain, "The decision gave Simon Legree, brother of the plaintiff, the right to redeem 310 acres of corn land, eight miles from Blankville. The land sold at sheriff's sale in 1943 for \$3,500." He can quote a court official in order to explain better what the ruling means. For example, "The decision means that most Nevada divorces aren't worth the paper they are written on as far as Oregon is concerned," a high court official said.

There is more and more need for entire news articles that explain the meaning of important supreme court decisions. The following story by James Marlow of the Associated Press "fills the bill" in this respect:

WASHINGTON, May 4—(AP)—The Supreme Court has given an important decision on this question:

Can a person, because of race or color, be barred from owning or living in property anywhere in the United States?

The court's answer was not a simple yes or no. It was a kind of double answer. To understand it, here is the background.

In 1866, when Congress was eager to see newly-freed Negro slaves

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

get equal treatment, the 14th amendment to the Constitution was adopted.

It Says

“. . . No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any persons of life, liberty or property without due process of law. . . .”

The important thing to keep in mind is the part which says “no state . . . shall deprive any person of . . . property without due process of law. . . .”

In the years since 1866 the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that:

It is contrary to the 14th amendment—and therefore unconstitutional—for any state or city to have a law barring a person, because of race or color, from owning or occupying property anywhere.

But even though such laws were knocked out, white property owners kept on agreeing among themselves not to sell or rent to people of other color or race, like Negroes or Mongolians.

Then, recently, this happened:

A Negro family in Missouri and another in Michigan bought homes in white neighborhoods where the white people had agreed not to sell or rent to Negroes.

So those white people in both states went to their state courts to have their agreements backed up by court order.

And in both cases, Missouri and Michigan, the state courts said the agreements were legal and the Negroes would have to get out.

Then the Negroes went to the U.S. Supreme Court to fight the state court rulings.

The Negroes pointed to the 14th amendment. They said their rights under that amendment were violated if they couldn't buy property where they wished.

And yesterday the Supreme Court upheld the Negroes but in this way:

1. The court said it's all right, and no violation of the 14th amendment, if white property owners agree among themselves not to rent or sell to Negroes or any group because of race or color.

The court said that's just a private agreement and is not covered by the 14th amendment which says only that a state can't deprive a person of his right to property without due process of law.

2. But—it's a violation of the 14th amendment—and therefore un-



constitutional—when a state court backs up such a private, restrictive agreement. Why?

Because then it is a state acting “without due process of law.” Why? Because the court is acting for the state and the Supreme Court already has ruled a state can’t have a law barring a person from owning property on account of his race or color.

So, in short, the Supreme Court decision means:

You, Jones and Smith, can agree among yourselves not to sell or rent to a Negro. You’re not violating the 14th amendment by that.

“That amendment,” says Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson, who wrote the opinion, “erects no shield against merely private conduct, however discriminatory or wrongful.”

But, from now on, you cannot get the state court to back up your private agreement. And if a Negro can find a way of moving into your neighborhood, no court can order him out because of race or color.

The Supreme Court decision speaks only of race or color. It says nothing about agreements that would bar anyone, such as a Jew, on religious grounds. One of the most highly-placed lawyers in the government was asked about this. He said:

“It would seem absurd to think that the Supreme Court limited its decision to race or color. I certainly think the decision prevents a state from backing up an agreement that discriminated because of religion.”

Maybe a test case will be taken to the Supreme Court to get an out-right decision on the religious question.

*c. How the decision changes the rulings of lower courts.* It is not enough for the reporter to say that the decision of the lower court has been reversed or upheld. He must explain what the ruling of the lower court was, say that the ruling has now been reversed or upheld, and then explain what that means. For example, an *Associated Press* reporter wrote:

A Cook County circuit court ruling held that the Progressives were not an established party and could not enter city and county office candidates in the primary.

The Supreme Court reversed the circuit court and directed it to “take such further action as is consistent with the views expressed” in the tribunal’s opinion.

*d. How the judges voted and what the vote means.* If the ruling is handed down on the strength of a 5-to-4 decision, the news story should contain considerable information explaining both sides of the case. If one or more of the judges refrains from voting, if there is a tie vote, or if there are strong dissenting opinions, the reporter should dig around for more facts. One of the justices might disqualify himself from the case because he has a personal interest in the problem before the court. In the event of a tie vote the ruling of the lower court is usually considered upheld. This point should be explained to the reader, otherwise he will wonder why the decision of the lower court is upheld when the vote is 4 and 4, with one justice not voting. If no vote is announced, this too should go into the news story.

*e. The personalities behind the appeal.* News stories of appellate court decisions can be made much more interesting if the reporter learns something about the persons and organizations interested in carrying the case through the courts to the highest tribunal. He should ask himself, "What kind of people are they? What is their stake in the matter? Why are they spending a lot of money to get this law clarified?"

*f. Any dramatic, immediate effects of the ruling.* Often the high court ruling creates strange situations. For example, a state supreme court ruling that a city charter was unconstitutional immediately threw the city into confusion because there was no official municipal head to sign salary checks.

## **127. Inquests**

A coroner's inquest is a hearing held to investigate the facts concerning deaths brought about by unnatural causes. An inquest is not a court trial, although it is often conducted by the coroner somewhat in the manner of a trial. A jury is summoned, testimony is given, and the jury returns a verdict indicating the

manner of death and attaching responsibility for the death when it is known or strongly suspected.

A coroner's jury can only "recommend" action to be taken by prosecuting officials. The reporter should not make the mistake of saying that a coroner's jury "directed the prosecuting attorney to hold the prisoner for grand jury action." The jury can only "recommend" that such action be taken. On the other hand, if the coroner's jury fails to make a recommendation, the prosecuting attorney can go ahead and order arraignment of a suspect without the recommendation. The coroner's jury is in fact an advisory body only. In some states the inquest serves as a preliminary hearing and on recommendation of the jury a suspect is bound over to the grand jury for formal indictment. In other states the inquest is authority for an arrest and a preliminary hearing follows.

The coroner has authority to summon witnesses and jurors. He has jurisdiction over the body or bodies of the deceased until he certifies them for burial. Jurors view the body, often visit the scene of the crime or accident, and hear testimony seeking to establish the identity of the deceased and the manner of his death.

**Caution:** Reporters should distinguish between inquest and autopsy. Inquests, like other meetings, take place, and autopsies are performed. The autopsy is like an operation. It is an official probing into and operation on the body to determine the exact cause of death.

In many instances at the time of the inquest no arrest has been made. The reporter should be careful, as in all pre-trial stories, not to indicate guilt. Verdicts of the coroner's jury can be quoted as stated by the jury or presented indirectly. In either case the reporter should adhere closely to the meaning of the jurors. For example:

## DEATH BY STRANGULATION

The six-man coroner's jury returned a verdict that Miss Linoleum died June 1 in Coon Hollow from strangulation and stab wounds at the hands of Pvt. Leo Footstool, 19-year-old Blank Field soldier.

## SUICIDE

A Blankville county coroner's jury ruled Friday night that Master Sergeant Bruce Brookes, 31, Coalton, S.D., soldier stationad at Blank Field, died Monday evening of a broken neck received by hanging himself in the back yard of his home at 10 East Fir Street, Blankville.

## SLAIN BY "PERSONS UNKNOWN"

Hoople was questioned for 45 minutes by Dr. Z. Y. Roe, county coroner, before a jury which decided Mrs. Hoople was slain by "persons unknown" but recommended that her husband be held for "further examination and investigation."

## DIED OF STAB WOUNDS

At an inquest conducted Monday night by Dr. Z. Y. Roe, county coroner, the jury found that Buskin "came to his death as the result of stab wounds in the abdomen, caused by a knife in the hands of Joe Blow."

In an advance story of an inquest the reporter should tell (a) when and where the inquest will be held; (b) who will conduct the inquest; (c) known facts concerning the death; (d) what police action has been taken; (e) names of jurors, if they have been selected, and (f) facts about the deceased.

In the story of the inquest the reporter should include (a) verdict and recommendations of the coroner's jury; (b) where and when the inquest was held; (c) testimony of witnesses; (d) police action; (e) what the accused had to say, if he was present; and (f) names of the foreman and members of the coroner's jury.

**EXAMPLE**

*Coroner's jury verdict: accidental death; reporter presents straightforword account of inquest*

A coroner's jury Monday night ruled that Lloyd E. Roadmaster, 49, Route 2, Blankville, died June 10 as a result of an accident.

At an inquest held in the Boomer funeral home, the jurors decided that the state division of highways employee met his death when the truck he was driving was struck from the rear by a trailer truck which was attempting to pass him on Route 10, north of Blankville.

The verdict was returned after brief deliberation following a 60-minute investigation conducted by Z. Y. Roe, county coroner. The jury made no recommendations regarding criminal action against the driver of the tractor trailer, Samson Scutterthwaite, 23, Hercules, West Virginia.

Scutterthwaite has been charged with reckless driving. He is free on bond awaiting a hearing before Justice Roger W. Dodger, Blankville. Roe read a statement given by Scutterthwaite, who did not appear at the hearing.

Witnesses included Dr. Yew B. Wise, who testified that Roadmaster died of a hemorrhage and shock. He said that the driver of the dump truck suffered head wounds, a crushed chest, broken ribs, a fractured dislocation of the right knee, and a skull fracture.

Doctor Wise said that Taylor Wimbleton, 58, Route 2, Blankville, riding with Roadmaster, suffered broken ribs and a punctured lung. He was unable to testify, the doctor reported.

Roe read a statement given by Earl C. Crab, Chicago, operator of a Bluehound bus which followed the two trucks on the highway. Crab was quoted as saying that in his opinion Scutterthwaite was to blame for the accident.

In his statement, Scutterthwaite declared that the accident occurred as he started to pull out to pass the highway truck. He said he first saw the truck when it was about 50 feet in front of the big tractor trailer. He was moving at from 40 to 45 miles an hour at the time, he said.

The corner of the trailer hit the dump bed of the truck, Scutterthwaite declared in his statement. The bed was knocked off, the smaller truck sent off the highway, through a billboard, and badly damaged.

In the large truck, asleep at the time, was the co-driver, Walter P. Sloop, 21, Scutterthwaite said. Neither of them was hurt and the truck only slightly damaged.

Seldom Q. Wright, Blankville, official of the state highway division, testified at length and was cross-examined by two attorneys, representing parties involved in the crash.

Wright said the trailer truck had a dent in the right fender indicating, he believed, that the truck passed partially under the corner of the dump vehicle.

Oldham P. Rooster served as jury foreman. Other members were Tipton Q. Monterey, Starr Y. Gopher, Simpson T. Berlow, Clyde A. Liner, and John Jones.

## **128. Grand Juries**

The grand jury is not a trial jury. As known to the common law its duties are (a) to inquire into crimes committed in the county from which its members are drawn; (b) to determine the probability of guilt; (c) to find indictments against supposed defendants. The grand jury is described (24 Am Jur 832) as "a part of the machinery of government, having for its object the detection and punishment of crime" and as "an appendage of the court under whose supervision it is impaneled."

Generally, the grand jury is charged with the duty of inquiring into (a) cases of persons imprisoned and not indicted; (b) cases of persons out on bail and not indicted; (c) cases of misconduct of public officers of any kind; (d) condition and management of jails and infirmaries; and (e) violations of criminal laws of the state.

It is the policy of the law that investigations and deliberations of a grand jury be conducted in secret to (a) inspire jurors with a confidence of security; (b) obtain freedom of discussion in the jury room; (c) conceal fact of the indictment from the accused so he will not attempt to escape; (d) prevent perjury by withholding facts which, if known, might cause the accused to procure false testimony; and (e) save persons accused the trouble

and disgrace of being arraigned and tried in public on a criminal charge when there is insufficient cause for it.

Concerning the reporting of grand jury proceedings and reports, the following policies generally apply:

a. Jurors are under oath to secrecy and should not be asked for news of their deliberations. On the other hand, a statement published in a newspaper by the foreman of a Georgia jury to the effect that the jury was investigating a crime situation which had become deplorable was held not to violate the requirement of secrecy (*Howard v State*, 4 SE 2d 418, 60 Ga App 229).

b. The reporter has the right to question witnesses, attorneys, and prosecutors. In *People v Minet*, 73 NE 2d 529, the court ruled: "No secrecy is imposed on a witness before a grand jury either as to the fact that he testified or as to the testimony given by him."

c. The reasons for secrecy in regard to grand jury investigations apparently no longer exist (1) after the indictment or presentment is found; (2) custody of the accused is had, and (3) the grand jury has been discharged (24 Am Jur 866).

d. Reports of grand juries upon matters within their cognizance are ordinarily held to be privileged as judicial proceedings (*Sweet v Post Pub Co*, 215 Mass 450).

In actual practice the reporter, the newspaper, and local authorities must cooperate to arrive at a decision on what to print and what not to print concerning grand jury activities. In many cases persons being investigated by the grand jury are already in custody and have already been charged with certain crimes. News stories which indicate that the grand jury has been called to consider charges against such persons certainly do not violate any need for secrecy. Comments by prosecuting officials concerning such cases, while not privileged, may be reported if they are factually correct, fair, and free from bias. Predictions of the prosecuting attorney concerning what action the grand jury will take in such cases are questionable. The need for secrecy is

evident in cases where the grand jury is considering the indictment of persons who do not know they are being investigated and who therefore are not in custody. General statements in newspapers that the grand jury is investigating crime conditions in the county do not violate the need for secrecy (See part (a) above).

When reporting the decisions of a grand jury, in fairness to innocent persons, the reporter might well "play up" in his lead the "no true bills" returned by the jury. For example:

The June grand jury today declined to indict Clay Zerzes, 19, who shot and killed his uncle, Boyer Boyer, 37, May 3 while the older man was beating his own mother.

No true bills also were reported in the case of Martin Mumbler, 32, and Jargo Jenses, 21, both of Blankville, who were bound over to the grand jury May 20 in connection with the alleged theft of an automobile belonging to Jasper Oakes, Coon Hollow.

Twelve of the fifteen indictments returned by the grand jury named three Blankville men in connection with the strong-arm robbery of two men, Harvey A. Bloodstone and Colton Z. Brasshat, both of 77 East Bird Avenue, on May 10.

True bills also were reported, etc.

**Caution:** The use of the terms "true bills" and "no true bills" without indicating clearly what they mean might lead to confusion on the part of the reader. A lead which merely says, "No true bills were returned for Cannon A. Fodder and Roger U. Flattop by the April grand jury which met Monday. True bills were returned for two cases of embezzlement, for charges of robbery, and four forgeries," is apt to be misunderstood.

## **129. Handling Stories of Divorce**

Newspaper treatment of divorce complaints and divorce proceedings does not seem to affect the nation's divorce situation one way or another. Even sensational treatment of such news does not appear to lead others to the divorce courts or induce them to



stay away. Divorce news merely reflects the climax of unhappy married life, a climax that would probably result with or without newspaper publicity. The need for soft-pedaling divorce news, therefore, arises for other reasons. Many editors believe that the public good is served merely by publishing a brief account of the filing of the divorce action, the causes for the action, the judge's decree, and the terms of settlement. They believe that a family newspaper should not concern itself with all the details of an unhappy married life. If the newspaper feels any responsibility toward the family as an institution, as it should, that responsibility can be fulfilled by a conservative report, a nonhumorous report, of the divorce and its causes. Many times the causes listed in a petition for divorce mean nothing. They are used in the official complaint to satisfy requirements of divorce laws of the state in which the divorce is sought. Responsible reporters might further serve the public good if they would dig deeper into the real causes for divorce, interview responsible authorities on the subject, study case histories, and present their findings in investigative news stories. Such stories could arouse public opinion to the point where demands would be made for correction of divorce causes. *Life* magazine recently introduced this kind of reporting for its nationwide readership. (April 11, 1949.)

Reports of divorce proceedings, when allowed by the court, are privileged. Complaints for divorce which have been filed but in no way acted upon by the court usually are not privileged. Reporters ordinarily are safe in stating that the complaint has been filed. They report the content of the complaint at their own risk, since it is not privileged in most states.

Concerning use of humor in divorce stories the *St. Paul Dispatch* and *Pioneer Press* tell their reporters: "Frivolous treatment of divorce stories, playing up the comic element in marital disputes, is often deeply resented by individuals involved as well as by many social agencies and organizations. Divorce is not ordinarily funny and will be treated in a sober and factual way, in

the absence of obviously and conspicuously humorous elements in the story."

*Saying it right:* When announcing the divorce decree use the terms "granted" or "obtained." Do not say that the divorce was "won." Medals and other honors are awarded and won. Avoid saying, "Mrs. Blank today filed suit to divorce her husband." Say she filed suit for divorce. She could divorce only her husband. Write it: "A divorce was granted today to Mrs. Blank," not "Mrs. Blank was granted a divorce today." The divorce is granted, not the person suing for it.

The following stories of complaints for divorce are typical in cases where the persons are not public figures:

#### CRUELTY CHARGED

Mrs. Clara Elmtree, 109 East Maple Street, Blankville, has filed suit for divorce in circuit court against Paul A. Elmtree. Mrs. Elmtree charges cruelty and asks custody of two Elmtree children. The couple was married June 10, 1934.

#### DRUNKENNESS CHARGED

Charging her husband, Karl Barleycorn, with habitual drunkenness, Cora Barleycorn had a divorce suit on file Wednesday in circuit court. They were married on Feb. 27, 1945, and separated the day the suit was filed.

Straight factual treatment is recommended for the following information used in stories of divorce proceedings and divorces granted:

- a. Name and identification of the principals in the case.
- b. Nature of the suit—suit for separate maintenance, divorce, annulment of marriage.
- c. Grounds named in the suit.
- d. Children involved in the action and whether custody of the children is sought.
- e. Date and place of marriage of the couple.

f. Terms of the settlement.

g. Name the plaintiff, if a woman, will assume after the divorce.

h. In the cases of prominent persons, other marriages and divorces, if any.

Such feature treatment in the lead as the following is not objectionable to most persons:

#### TREATED AS SLAVE

A British war bride complained to Judge Oskar Orr in circuit court yesterday that her husband had treated her as a slave, forcing her to work 14 to 16 hours a day in their home and his laundry.

#### WAR ROMANCE ENDS

A wartime romance between a WAVE and a wounded marine hero, which began in a Blankville naval hospital and resulted in their marriage, apparently went on the rocks yesterday in circuit court.

### 130. Contempt of Court

The foregoing comments on court reporting imply the need for responsible newspaper treatment of trials and pre-trial information to prevent trial by newspaper and what the *Chicago Tribune* once called "journalistic lynch law." There is also the real danger that the reporter and his superiors will be cited for contempt of court for irresponsible handling of court news. Contempt of court may take the form of "contempt in court" or "contempt out of court." Contempt in court arises when a person in the courtroom acts contrary to an order of the judge or conducts himself in such a way as to hinder or prevent the holding of a fair trial of the accused. A news photographer who takes pictures in the courtroom contrary to a court order may be held in contempt of court. Contempt out of court arises when a person attacks the integrity of the court or comments on pending cases in such a

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

way as to hinder or prevent the holding of a fair trial of the accused. The court reporter, therefore, is more directly concerned with the danger of being cited for indirect or "out of court" contempt. To lessen the danger of such citations the reporter should

a. Report facts only with no comments on the guilt or innocence of the accused.

b. Use care in reporting the filing of complaints and preliminary hearings.

c. Use care in reporting confessions and statements of persons accused of crimes.

d. Use care in reporting the past history of a person awaiting trial.

e. Avoid criticism of court officials during a trial unless public interest and justice to the accused are in jeopardy.

Unless reporters, backed by fair-minded newspaper authorities, adhere to high standards of fairness and responsibility to the public good, they may find the power of contempt generally extended to the point already reached in Baltimore, Md., where the Baltimore Supreme Bench has set up rules governing pre-trial reporting. *Editor & Publisher* of July 3, 1948, reported:

The Baltimore Supreme Bench, made up of circuit judges who preside over State courts in the city, has two rules which subject police, attorneys and newspapers to punishment for contempt if they divulge or publish certain details about crimes before the case comes up for trial.

Officers, for example, may not say and newspapers may not report that a man has confessed or denied a crime.

The rules also restrict pictures of the accused.

The restrictions prohibit pictures in courtrooms, in or near the courthouse during trials, and at the jail. An accused cannot be photographed anywhere while in custody without his consent.

Also prohibited are:

"Issuance by police authorities, the states' attorney, counsel for the defense, or any other person having official connection with a case, of

any statement relative to the conduct of the accused, statements or admissions by the accused, or other matters bearing upon the issues to be tried.

"Issuance of any statement or forecast as to the future course of action of either the prosecuting authorities or the defense relative to conduct of the trial.

"Publication of any matter which may prevent a fair trial, improperly influence the court or the jury or tend in any manner to interfere with the administration of justice."

### 131. Terminology

**ACCESSORIES** Persons not present while the crime is being committed, but who aid in the criminal act. If aid to the person or persons committing the crime was given before the commission of the crime, the accessory is known as an *accessory before the fact*. If the aid is given after the commission of the crime (aids escape, helps evade prosecution) he is known as the *accessory after the fact*.

**AFFIRM** Appellate courts either *affirm* or *reverse* the decisions of inferior courts. If the decision is *affirmed*, it is confirmed or upheld. If the decision is *reversed*, it is not upheld.

**APPEAL** Not the same as a motion for a new trial. The *appeal* is an application to a higher court for review of the case and review of the judgment of the lower court. The *appeal* may be based upon alleged errors in the lower

court proceedings or upon alleged injustices committed.

**APPELLANT, APPELLEE** The person who was defeated in the lower court brings the case before the higher court. He is the *appellant*. The person appealed against is the *appellee*. Often parties reverse their positions when a case moves from a lower court to a higher one. For example, the defendant in the lower court becomes the appellant (plaintiff) before the higher court.

**ARRAIGNMENT** The process of bringing the prisoner before the judge so that the charges can be read and his plea of guilty or not guilty received.

**ASSAULT and BATTERY** The charge of *assault and battery* is usually brought when one person has actually been struck by another. The *assault* part of the charge refers to the threatening

attitude of the accused, and the *battery* part to the striking of the blow. *Simple assault* means threatening another by any method which indicates an attempt to do bodily harm. If such threats cause the victim to flee, the charge becomes *aggravated assault*.

**ATTACHMENT** A *writ of attachment* is a written court order which is used to authorize the seizure of a person or property involved in a suit in the court.

**BAIL BOND** In newspapers *bail bond* is usually referred to as *bail* or *bond*. *Bail bond* is security required in the form of cash or realty to guarantee the appearance of the accused in court. *Bail bond* may be furnished either by the accused or his friends. The accused may be held without bond if the law so stipulates in the case of serious crimes.

**BENCH WARRANTS** Orders for the arrest of persons indicted by a grand jury in cases where the persons are not in the custody of police authorities when the indictment is returned. *Bench warrants* are also issued for the re-arrest of persons released on bond to await the action of the grand jury.

**BILL OF PARTICULARS** The defendant can move for a *bill of particulars* after he has heard the

charges against him. The petition means he wants the indictment made more definite. He wants the prosecutor to be more specific in his charges. He wants an "itemized statement."

**CHALLENGE FOR CAUSE** When the jury is being impaneled, defense lawyers or prosecutors may challenge a juror *for cause*; that is, they disqualify the juror for a legal reason. The juror can be disqualified *for cause* if he has already made up his mind about the case.

**CHANGE OF VENUE** The accused may ask for a *change of venue* for either one of two reasons: (a) he believes the judge is prejudiced; or (b) he does not think he can get a fair trial in the locality where the trial is scheduled to take place. In the first instance he gets a new judge in the same jurisdiction. In the second instance his trial is moved to a new jurisdiction.

**CHARGE TO THE JURY** The judge's *charge to the jury* is in the nature of instructions concerning the law applicable in the case and the decisions the jury can make.

**CODICIL** An addition to a will already drawn up. The *codicil* has the same legal force as the main body of the will when properly executed.

### CONCURRENT SENTENCE

If the judge decided that sentence must be served concurrently, the prisoner serves the longest term given. For example, if the prisoner gets one year on one charge, three years on a second charge, and two years on a third charge, he serves the three years only.

**CONTEMPT** Persons may be cited for *contempt* of court for disregarding the authority of a court or other public body. *Civil contempt*, punishable by fine, may result when a person fails to appear in court when he is ordered to do so. *Criminal contempt*, punishable by fine or imprisonment, is an offense against a court, such as the taking of news pictures in the courtroom when the judge has forbidden it.

**CONTINUANCE** Either the defense or the prosecution can move for a *continuance* or delay of the trial. Sometimes the motion is based upon legitimate reasons such as sick witnesses, new evidence being prepared, etc. At other times the *motion for continuance* is a legal maneuver to tire out the opposition by delays of the case.

**COURTS OF RECORD** Courts which keep permanent records of their proceedings. Courts not of record, such as city magistrate courts, do not keep permanent records.

**DEFENDANT** In a criminal case the *defendant* is the accused. In a civil action he is the party against whom the action is brought. See also *Appellant*.

### DEFERRED SENTENCE

Same as *suspended sentence*. The judge might sentence a wrongdoer to thirty days in jail and then *suspend* or *defer* the sentence pending good behavior of the accused.

**DEMURRER** A challenge by the defense on the ground that the offense is not legally a crime. The *demurrer* is not a denial of the charges but merely the accused's way of saying that he does not think they constitute a legal wrong.

**DEPOSITION** In instances where it is impossible for a witness to appear before a court he may be asked to present a *deposition*, or written testimony, to be presented at the trial. The witness may be asked to answer certain questions in the presence of authorized persons. The signed statement can then be introduced at the trial.

**DIRECTED VERDICT** After the plaintiff or prosecution has been heard and the defense lawyer gets ready to present his case, he may ask the court for a *directed verdict*. In effect he says: "Judge, you have heard the case against

my client. I believe the prosecution has failed to make a case against him. Will you rule on the matter?"

**EASEMENT** The right of a person to use the lands of another by virtue of his ownership of adjoining lands or lands in some way associated with the other person's property. In situations where parties use the same driveway, and one party sells his property, the new owner may use the same driveway. The right of the new owner to use the driveway is an acquired right that goes with the property he buys. Without ownership of the property he would not have the right.

**EMBRACERY** An attempt to bribe or influence members of a jury.

**COURTS OF EQUITY** Courts in which a person can get relief whenever he finds there is no remedy in other courts. In equity courts the plaintiff can get decrees that forbid or order the performance of an act. In common-law courts a person might be able to get damages after a wrong is committed, but in a court of equity he can get an injunction to prevent the wrong from being done.

**EXTRADITION** When a crime is committed in one state and the wrongdoer escapes to another state before his arrest, if he does

not *waive extradition*, the governor of the state in which he is arrested must agree to let the prisoner return to the state of the alleged crime for trial, otherwise he cannot be returned.

**FELONY** As distinguished from *misdemeanor*, a *felony* is a serious crime. A *misdemeanor* is a minor offense. Both are defined by statute to give them specific meanings. Such things as grand larceny, rape, and homicide are *felonies* while traffic offenses and disturbance of the peace are *misdemeanors*.

**FRIEND OF THE COURT** An outsider who requests or is asked to take part in a case. He may advise the judge as an expert in an area unfamiliar to the judge, or he may present testimony to indicate a personal interest in the case. His participation in the case has no more weight than the judge wishes to give it.

**HOMICIDE** The killing of one person by another. Homicide is either *murder* or *manslaughter*, according to the degree of "malice aforethought." State statutes indicate various degrees of *murder*. First-degree murder is premeditated and "with malice aforethought."

**INDETERMINATE SENTENCE** A sentence that sets a maximum and a minimum prison term. The prisoner may only serve the mini-



mum term if parole authorities agree that his conduct has been good and that his "debt to society" has been satisfied. The judge might sentence a prisoner to serve from one to five years. According to the decision of parole authorities, he might serve all or any part of the five years.

**INFORMATION** Wrongdoers may be brought to trial by *informations* filed by the prosecuting attorney. In many states this procedure may be followed only for less serious crimes. For the serious crimes *indictment* by a grand jury is necessary to bring the accused to trial.

**INJUNCTION** An order by a court to prevent a person or group from acting or to compel them to act. A *temporary injunction* may be issued by a judge for a short period of time. At the end of the period designated the parties must again appear in court to show cause why the injunction should not be made permanent.

**INTERLOCUTORY DECREE** A court order that is not final. It becomes final only after certain things have been done or certain requirements met. Divorce decrees often are *interlocutory*, meaning that one of the parties must remain separated from the other for a specified length of time. At the end of the designated period the decree becomes *final*.

**JOHN DOE, MARY ROE** Fictitious names used in divorce actions to refer to correspondents; names used at grand jury hearings when the real names of wrongdoers are unknown (John Doe hearing). *John Doe warrants* are used in cases where wrongdoers are known by sight description but not by name.

**JURISDICTION** Judicial power of a court; indicates the kind of cases handled by a court. Courts of *original jurisdiction* try cases when they first go to the courts. Courts of *concurrent jurisdiction* are authorized to deal with the same kinds of cases.

**LARCENY** Might be defined simply as *theft*, but the law defines it as the taking of the property of another and converting it to the "taker's" own use. The difference between *petit larceny* and *grand larceny* lies in the value of the stolen goods. A state statute, for example, might set the limit for *petit larceny* under \$10.

**MANDATE** An order issued by a court, especially an order by an appellate court to a public officer or a lower court.

**MAYHEM** A crime in which one person dismembers or maims another. To bite off another's ear would be *mayhem* (maim).

**MISDEMEANOR** See *Felony*.

**MISTRIAL** Results when a jury cannot agree. The jury may request dismissal after it has been deadlocked for an unnecessarily long time; or the judge may call the members before him and dismiss them.

**MOTION FOR SEVERANCE**

A motion requesting a separate trial. If two persons are charged with the same crime, one of them might file a *motion for a severance*.

**MURDER, MANSLAUGHTER**  
See *Homicide*.

**NOLLE PROSEQUI** A plea made by the prosecuting attorney indicating that he does not wish to prosecute.

**OBITER DICTUM** That part of a judge's opinion which shows how he arrived at his opinion. The *obiter dictum* (said in passing) is not an official part of the decision but provides background on the decision or gives the judge's view on a particular problem related to the case.

**OPINIONS** Decisions of justices of an appellate court. One justice writes the *majority opinion* which becomes the court's decision. A *concurring opinion* is one which supports the majority view but is arrived at by different reasoning. A *dissenting opinion* expresses the opposite view to that taken by the majority.

**PEACE BOND** If one person threatens another, he may be required to furnish a *peace bond* as assurance that he will "keep the peace" and not attack the other person.

**PEREMPTORY CHALLENGE**

Each side in a case has a certain number of *peremptory challenges* specified by law. Such challenges allow each side to disqualify jurors whom they believe not to be sympathetic to their side of the case. In such situations the parties in the case are not able to disqualify the jurors *for cause* because they have no reasons for disqualifying them acceptable to the court.

**PERJURY** Lying when under oath during a court trial. *Subornation of perjury* is attempting to get another to perjure himself.

**PLAINTIFF, COMPLAINANT**

Persons who start legal action against others.

**PLAINTIFF IN ERROR, DEFENDANT IN ERROR**

When cases from lower courts move to an appellate court for review by a writ of error, the person who lost the case in the lower court is known as the *plaintiff in error* and the other party as the *defendant in error*.

**PLEADINGS** Papers filed in a court case by both sides prior to the hearing are referred to as

**pleadings.** The purpose of such papers is to eliminate side issues and bring the parties to the main dispute at issue.

**PLEA IN ABATEMENT** A method of holding up a trial because of an alleged error in the indictment. Incorrect spelling of the name of the accused or some other clerical error might be the basis of the *plea in abatement*.

**PRESENTMENT** A bill of indictment which originates with the grand jury itself, and not with the prosecuting attorney, is called a *presentment*.

**PROBATE** Legal matters arising in connection with the filing of wills, handling of estates, etc., go to special *probate courts* or regular courts with jurisdiction over such matters. Wills must be admitted to *probate* before an estate can be settled; that is, they must be approved. The probating of the will gives persons who wish to contest it an opportunity to do so. If there is no contest, the will is admitted to *probate* and properly recorded in court records.

**QUASH THE INDICTMENT** Different from a *plea in abatement* in that it challenges the form of the indictment as being defective. The accused might contend that the grand jury was illegally drawn or that the indictment itself was improperly drawn up. If the *motion*

to *quash* is granted, the state can draw up another indictment and proceed with the case.

**REPLEVIN** An action used to get back personal property unlawfully held by another.

**REPRIEVE** A stay of execution granted pending review of the case—usually used in connection with persons sentenced to death. The governor of a state or a court may order a *reprieve*. Also called a *stay of execution*.

**RESPONDENT** In appellate cases same as the *appellee*.

**STATE'S EVIDENCE** Wrongdoers often "turn state's evidence"; that is, they agree to testify for the state against fellow offenders.

**STAY OF EXECUTION** See *Reprieve*.

**SUBORNATION** See *Perjury*.

**SUBPOENA** A court order requiring a person to appear before the court and give testimony at a trial. When a *subpoena duces tecum* is issued, the witness must attend the trial and also bring with him certain records or documents.

**SUBPOENA DUCES TECUM** See *Subpoena*.

**SUSPENDED SENTENCE** See *Deferred Sentence*.

**TESTATE, INTESTATE** A person who dies leaving a will is said

to die *testate*. One who dies without leaving a will dies *intestate*.

**TRUE BILL, NO TRUE BILL**

If a grand jury votes to indict a person, the words "true bill" are written across the bill of indictment prepared by the prosecuting attorney. In such cases the reporter writes that the person was indicted by the grand jury for such and such a crime. If the grand jury finds the case against the accused too weak for indictment, the reporter writes that the jury voted a no true bill. Actually, the words "no true bill" do not appear on the indictment. The grand jury uses the word "ignoramus" instead.

**VENIREMEN** Persons summoned to be members of a jury panel. From among the veniremen the jury is selected.

**WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS**

An order directing that the prisoner be brought before the court to determine why he is being held. This is a very old and important legal step, the purpose of which is to prevent persons from being held in jail too long without trial.

**WRIT OF MANDAMUS** An order to compel public officials to do something which they are required by law or the duties of their office to perform but which they are not performing.

**132. Your Local Courts**

---

**CITY:**

City Judge

\_\_\_\_\_

City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_

Bailiff

---

**COUNTY:**

County Judge

\_\_\_\_\_

County Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_

Probate Judge

\_\_\_\_\_

Probate Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_

Juvenile Judge

\_\_\_\_\_

Juvenile Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_

Sates Attorney

---

**TOWNSHIP:**

Justice of the  
Peace

\_\_\_\_\_

Marshal

---

**CIRCUIT NO. \_\_\_\_\_:**

Circuit Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_

Circuit Judge

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

STATE:

Appellate Dist.

No. \_\_\_\_\_:

Appellate Clerk

Appellate Judge

Supreme Court

Chief Justice

Assoc. Justice

---

FEDERAL:

U.S. Court of  
Appeals

Clerk

Judge

---

---

---

---

U.S. District  
Court

Dist. No. \_\_\_\_\_ :

Clerk

---

---

Dist. Atty.

---

U.S. Marshal

---

Judge

---

---

---

**OTHER COURTS**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**OTHER COURTS**  
(cont'd.)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# *Investigative Reporting*

133. Polls	382
134. Formal Surveys	385
135. Informal Surveys—Roundup Stories	387
136. Campaigns	395
137. Gathering Facts	395
138. Filing Facts	396
139. Writing the Story	396

The investigative reporter must develop a "super" nose for news. His reporting is vertical as well as horizontal. Like a skilled surgeon, he probes deep into social conditions for causes and motivating factors. While the beat reporter or the general assignment man often is able to cover only the essential details of the news, the surface facts, special investigative reporters try to learn causes, detect trends, and interpret the facts. Investigative reporting may involve the making of a survey or the taking of a poll, and sometimes the stories fit into a campaign the newspaper is waging to get a bad condition corrected. These matters are taken up in more detail in the following pages.

### **133. Polls**

Your opinion concerning which of several candidates would make the best Governor or President isn't worth much. But your opinion, plus the opinions of a taxicab driver, a banker, a farmer, and several hundred other persons selected to give you a scientific cross section of the community, might make a good news story. That is the basic idea behind opinion polling. That is part of the reason for the popularity of "Inquiring Reporter" columns.

The nature of the main question asked in an opinion poll determines the number and kinds of additional questions which should be asked. For example, if you were trying to find out if persons in the community would favor the handing out by public health agencies of birth control information to married persons, you would need to know the age groups questioned, the extent of their schooling, and possibly their religious preference. Occu-

pations of persons, their sex, their political affiliations, their incomes, and the parts of town they live in, all help give meaning to a set of figures representing the persons' opinions on a particular topic.

The news story of the results of an opinion poll must be handled carefully because distortion of the facts is hard to avoid. Distortion may be brought about by the emphasis placed upon certain results. The fact that 57 per cent of the taxicab drivers of the community favored the construction of a new school building would not be important in a poll that indicated that 90 per cent of the total persons polled were opposed. But if the question asked concerned a raise in taxicab rates, the 57 per cent figure would have more significance. The question, then, in writing up the results of an opinion poll, is not how to get the results into the lead but which of the results to feature. Selection of the proper result to feature depends upon the significance of the facts and local reader interest.

There is no limitation on the ground that can be covered by opinion polls. Opinion polls can be made to bring out significant attitudes on important questions of the day. They can be made to provide data for feature stories. Persons in the community can be polled on the presidential two-term amendment or the "new look" in milady's dress length.

Stories of opinion polls should be specific about the authority for the facts and figures. Don't write, "According to a recent poll." Tell your reader when the poll was taken, and who took it. If the poll was tied up with a particular event or season of the year, or was made for any special reason, tell your reader about it. Such facts are a part of the news.

Concerning the care that should be taken in preparing poll result news for publication, Mr. Gordon M. Connelly, special representative of the National Opinion Research Center of Chicago, says:

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Although the opinion research profession has not yet defined standards even for itself, I think the more responsible members would concur on the following points in publications of polling organizations themselves:

1. The name of the organization should be carried with results.
2. As far as possible, purposes of the research should be described. Also the newspaper story should name the client for whom the research was conducted, if there was one.
3. The exact questions used should be published with results, rather than relying upon paraphrasing, which inevitably fails to cover any question adequately.
4. Order of the questions used or an actual copy of questionnaire should be appended to reports.
5. Nature and size of the sample should be given.
6. Exact interviewing dates should be reported.

Mr. Connelly further cautions the responsible reporter against the use of the words "survey" or "poll" in man-on-the-street reporting or inquiring reporter columns. Opinions gathered in this manner should be clearly indicated as being opinions of individuals presented for their human interest qualities and not as scientific sampling of opinion of the community.

### **EXAMPLE**

*Question lead used in public opinion poll story; results of the poll should appear earlier*

CHICAGO, April 19—Does re-educating the people of Germany mean more than schools and teachers and textbooks? Does re-education mean actual experience in democratic living?

These are questions which intelligent Americans are asking themselves—at a time when how best to re-educate the German people to a peaceful way of life constitutes a serious and important problem, even in today's problem-ridden world.

Two questions asked last winter by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, showed that a majority of Americans would favor certain specific measures which have been suggested for implementing the re-education program in Germany.

Almost six out of every 10 persons favored bringing groups of non-Nazis to this country to observe at first hand "democracy in action," and almost eight out of 10 would like to see American leaders in the various occupations and professions go to Germany to give "demonstrations in democracy."

As presented to the public, both questions were based upon the premise that "one of our main jobs in Germany is to re-educate the German people to a peaceful way of life."

N.O.R.C. interviewers asked adults in all parts of the United States these two questions:

"As you know, one of our main jobs in Germany is to re-educate the German people to a peaceful way of life. Would you approve or disapprove of bringing groups of Germans who have never been Nazis to this country, to see how democracy works over here?"

Approve	59%
Disapprove	36
Don't know	5
	<hr/> 100%

"Would you approve or disapprove of sending a number of American leaders in various occupations and professions to Germany, to show the Germans how we do things in a democratic country."

Approve	77%
Disapprove	19
Don't know	4
	<hr/> 100%

Still another N.O.R.C. question on the same survey indicated that more than two out of every three persons in this country (68 per cent) think it is possible to re-educate the German people to a peaceful way of life.

### **134. Formal Surveys**

For the purpose of this discussion "opinion polls" will be defined as those polls made to obtain *opinions* on miscellaneous matters. The opinions may be obtained by personal interview or formal questionnaire. "Formal surveys" as used here means those

surveys made by interview or questionnaire to obtain data which will reveal a condition or trend. In the news story the results of such a survey may be "backgrounded" with other pertinent facts drawn from research activities of the reporter. The formal survey should be made on a scientific basis. That is, there should be an adequate sampling of groups according to age, sex, occupation, income, religious and political beliefs, etc.

Reporters who decide to use the questionnaire method of obtaining data for an investigative news story will find that local organizations such as schools, scouts, clubs, and churches often will cooperate in getting the questionnaires filled out and returned. This is particularly true when the topic surveyed has local significance.

Reporters more often are called on to write news stories from data gathered by pollsters outside the newspaper. Sometimes the survey data are accompanied by interpretative material. Often the results are released only as tabulated data. In either case the reporter should do his own interpreting of the facts and gather his own background material. Also, he should attempt to localize the survey results as much as possible. For example, if the survey indicates that one out of every four American families is spending more money than it earns, the reporter might add, assuming that Blankville is typical, "this means that 2,000 families here are living beyond their means."

#### EXAMPLE

*Story of a government-sponsored survey; reporter tells how the survey was conducted and who conducted it*

WASHINGTON, May 31—(UP)—One out of every four American families is spending money faster than it can earn it, a government-sponsored cost-of-living survey showed today.

In 1946, the report said, this was true especially of families earning \$3,000 or less. But now, it added, an increasing number making up to \$7,500 find themselves in a similar fix.

The report was prepared by the University of Michigan Survey Center for the Federal Reserve Board. The Center used public opinion poll techniques to get a cross-section of 48,400,000 families.

"The general financial status of consumers showed the first signs of weakening in 1947," the report said in concluding that high prices are squeezing low income families out of the market for such things as homes and automobiles.

The only way about a quarter of the nation's families can keep up with prices is to dip into savings or buy on the installment plan, it said. This trend, it added, was reflected by the drop in family savings and checking accounts and the "substantial increase in total indebtedness."

But spending for durable goods and houses will continue to expand, the economists predicted. Businessmen can expect to ring up record sales in spite of rising prices because of "very sizable shifts" in spending to the "middle and upper income levels," the report said.

The report said there was a 20 per cent drop in the number of families in the home market, most of it concentrated among families earning less than \$2,000 a year.

And many people under the \$3,000 bracket who hoped to get a new car last year have now given up. Nevertheless, the economists expect the demand for cars to stay greater than the supply, with higher income families taking up the slack left by those who decide they can't afford them any more.

One-third of the \$5,000 and over families expect to buy radios, furniture and other types of durable goods this year. But in the \$2,000 to \$3,000 bracket the proportion is one-fifth, and it goes down to one-tenth in the \$1,000 bracket.

The report said that prospects are for more credit and mortgage buying, particularly by World War II veterans.

Last year, 9,000,000 families used installment credit, double the number in 1946. The total amount of this type of credit outstanding is at a new high, the report said, and because government curbs went off last November the total for 1948 will be higher than in 1947.

### **135. Informal Surveys—Roundup Stories**

The informal survey is the most widely used method of investigative reporters. It is "informal" in the sense that it does not

involve the use of scientific questionnaires and precise sampling. You do have to "think" the story through in advance. That is, you have to decide what condition or trend you are going to investigate. Then you should list all the possible sources of material on the subject. In a good investigation no angle is left without attention. No stone is left unturned. The reporter asks himself, "What is the situation in Blankville in regard to teachers' salaries?" Then he sets out to find the answer. Or, he might want to write an Easter feature on the cost of a new bonnet. A survey of prices in leading hat shops and department stores gives him the answer. If you attempt an investigative story of the informal survey type, keep the following in mind:

a. The reporter doing a special investigative news story must have the ability to work up and sustain enthusiasm for the story he is doing. He must become a temporary expert on the subject he is tracking down. If he "cools off" in his story, he cannot expect his readers to maintain enthusiasm.

b. The reporter should make a list of all his possible sources of material, both background as well as "new" facts.

c. He should gather all the material he can find before he begins to write a word or attempts to interpret the meaning of his data.

d. The story will have more unity, clarity, and interest if too much is not attempted. Define the limits of the survey and stay within those bounds. If the investigation concerns juvenile delinquency in the community, don't stray off into a discussion of crime detection or playground facilities, unless it is pertinent. Leave those topics for other stories.

**Caution:** Be honest with your readers. Don't decide ahead of time that city buses are overcrowded and then prove your point by counting the passengers during the only rush period of the day. Make your survey, and then report what you find.

Here again, be careful in your use of the words "poll" and



"survey." Do not mislead your reader into thinking that you have made a scientific, 100 per cent check of the situation. That is impossible under most newspaper working conditions. But do tell him honestly who was interviewed, what figures were selected and where they came from, and what conditions were actually observed.

The informal survey investigative story requires painstaking research and fact gathering rather than fancy writing. The important steps in this kind of reporting are the interviewing, the documentary research, the note taking, and the fact organization. After that the report will almost write itself.

The so-called "roundup" story is a form of investigative story, the facts for which are gathered by the informal survey method. After a heavy rainstorm, local reporters make a quick check of such local news sources as the police department, public utilities offices, fire department, etc., to get information concerning the damage. When public health reports indicate that mumps cases are rather heavy during a particular week, reporters check with local schools concerning class attendance. They get a "roundup" of the situation. Press associations send out "roundups" on strikes, accidents, and the weather by combining stories from all over the nation into one general story.

#### **EXAMPLES**

*Reporter learns what the college GI did with his war bonds;  
lead ties in with bills pending in Congress*

Student veterans at the University of Illinois have a potent argument to offer in support of bills pending in Congress to raise subsistence payments for ex-servicemen attending school under the "G.I. Bill of Rights."

Many of the former servicemen are spending, or already have spent, their war bond savings to supplement subsistence payments in order to stay in school.

A survey this week at the University revealed that of a representative group of student veterans, both married and unmarried, 14 per

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

cent now are digging into wartime bond savings to keep themselves in school. In a group of nearly 300 students interviewed, many of the 96 who no longer have bonds have cashed them for the same purpose.

While very few of the more than 10,000 veterans, both men and women, on the Champaign-Urbana campus feel that "the world owes us a living," most of them believe that the Government should take steps to raise subsistence payments to a level high enough to aid students as much as was intended when Public Law 346, the G.I. Bill, was enacted before the end of the war.

The \$65 a month for single veterans and the \$90 for married veterans buys much less today than when the bill was passed, long before the postwar inflationary spiral began.

The effects of that spiral on the student veteran were shown last month in a report by the American Council on Education. The Council said that a poll of 132 representative higher educational institutions all over the United States revealed that student board and room costs alone have risen 25.8 per cent since V-J Day.

Even Kilroy would like to imitate Richard and keep the door to his strong box closed until maturity time rolls around for his war bonds, many purchased from meager service pay. He'd rather accomplish, with his bonds, cashed at maturity, some of the objectives revealed by Illinois student veterans—those who can manage to avoid cashing their bonds for expenses of staying in college or the ever-present bugaboo of "an emergency."

In one group of 123 interviewed at the University of Illinois, 90 of the 107 who now hold bonds intend to keep them as long as possible. More than half of them, 63, have no definite plans in view for the proceeds from the bonds, other than such tentative items as reinvestment, housing, and others.

But the other 27 clinging to their bonds have set their goals. Topping the list is home building and furnishing, followed by business, automobiles, future schooling, education of children, future marriage, and insurance, in that order.

Only 88 of a total of 283 interviewed said they would or might be willing to exchange their War Bonds now for desired types of surplus war items.

The Committee on Relationships of Higher Education to the Federal Government has indorsed proposals for a change in Public Law 346 to provide for payment of \$10 a month to students with one child and \$7.50 for each additional child. These provisions already are in effect

under Public Law 16, the Rehabilitation Training Act, which allows \$90 monthly to single veterans enrolled in school under its provisions and \$105 for married veterans.

By Jan. 14, less than two weeks after the 80th Congress convened, 11 bills had been introduced in the House and one in the Senate either to increase subsistence payments under the G.I. bill or to raise or eliminate ceilings for students under the bill.

Bills for subsistence boosts include one, introduced by Representative A. Leonard Allen (D) of Louisiana, to pay \$75 monthly to single veterans, \$100 to married veterans, \$15 for the first child, and \$10 for each additional child.

Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (R) of Massachusetts, in her bill, has asked a \$100 and \$125 monthly scale, with a flat \$10 a month for each child.

*—Christian Science Monitor*

*Reporter "digs up" the facts on group insurance;  
lead indicates a local trend*

The number of industrial and manufacturing workers in the Twin Cities covered by group life insurance is rising rapidly.

While complete figures were not available, a check of local insurance agencies Saturday showed that the volume of new group life contracts placed in the Twin Cities area in the first quarter of 1948 is up sharply over the volume in the same period last year.

Several firms reported doubling their business, and the Northwestern National Life Insurance Co. actually placed more group life insurance in the Twin Cities in the first three months of 1948 than it did during the entire year of 1947.

## NATIONAL TREND

The local increase is part of a national trend that has seen an increase of \$10,398,000,000, or almost 50 per cent, in the amount of family protection enjoyed by workers under group life insurance in the two years since the end of the war.

At the end of 1947, 17,300,000 workers were insured for \$33,168,000,000 under 48,000 monster contracts throughout the nation, the Institute of Life Insurance reported.

The average protection of the insured workers under these volun-

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

tary plans set up between employers and employees is more than \$1,900, the Institute added.

### STILL FALLS SHORT

While this is an important addition to other life insurance and savings owned by families, it is still far short in most cases of what group agents consider the ideal amount of group insurance per individual.

"We think that a worker's group insurance should about equal his annual wage," one local agent declared. "But we're running below that figure in this area."

Purchases of group life insurance in 1947 were the largest for any year on record, and the growth has continued during the first quarter of this year, the Institute declared.

"Purchases for the three months' period were reported at \$598,360,000, an increase of 9 per cent over 1947," it was pointed out.

The trend since the war has been from an "employer pay-all" policy to one in which the workers contribute part of the premiums, Minneapolis group agents agreed.

### 50-50 SPLIT

Most popular form is one in which the employer and the employee split the cost of the policy 50-50. During the war, the tax structure made it advantageous for companies to pay the entire cost of the program, agents said.

Insurance companies prefer to have employees bear part of the cost, one group agent declared.

"If the worker doesn't contribute to the cost, he doesn't really appreciate what he has," the agent explained. Group contracts are not being negotiated in which the employee bears the entire cost, however, he added.

Both union and employers are coming to recognize more and more the advantages of group insurance as a factor in job attractiveness, it was pointed out.

—Minneapolis *Morning Tribune*

*Reporter learns about the local auto market;  
lead describes a local situation*

Five minutes' time and a five block drive in a new car will net a neat \$500 profit these days—to those fortunate folk who happen to be at the top of the list for a 1947 automobile.

The newest of the entirely legal "rackets" works like this: when your dealer calls to say your 1947 car has arrived, you amble down and sign the title, giving the man a check for the list price of the sleek new auto. That five-minute drive takes you to most any used-car dealer, who will accept the hardly-dry title, give you a much larger check than you've just signed—and maybe he will drive you home in HIS new car.

However, he won't hold the car long, either. Commanding by this time a price exceeding the listed sale level by from \$450 to \$700, the "used" model will be resold within a half-day, probably, to someone who has not managed to be near the top of one of the many waiting lists.

A tour of the old-line automobile dealers in Champaign last week revealed that no salesman can promise delivery on a new car within six to eight months. Most firms are not anxious to add names to already-long lists, and several require posting of a down-payment deposit to insure sincerity. All insist that possession of a used car does not figure in the obtaining of a new model—but neither did any of the salesmen seem inclined to sympathize with a man who has no car at all.

Discouraged at the thought of waiting until the 1947 models have all been sold, this reporter continued his travels to several of the used-car lots, where he found that 1946 and 1947 cars in the Ford-Chevrolet-Plymouth group will cost from \$2,000 to \$2,500, depending on mileage a little and on model a lot.

Small-car offerings built in 1941 and 1942 are offered at \$1,000 to \$1,350, depending on condition. If a buyer insists on paying less than a used car cost when it was brand-new, he must take a model seven, eight or nine years old—most good 1939 cars being offered at about their original costs.

One dealer, who said he handled only late-model cars and "hated to have a 1941 standing on the lot," said that his entire stock has been turning over about once a week. Several dealers attend dealers-only auctions weekly at Decatur and other cities, where they buy, or sell, cars to meet their needs.

Price differentials for the larger cars seemed less than in the small-car group, a 1942 Packard having been offered at \$1,650—less than its new-car cost, and two pre-war Lincolns were offered at one dealer's lot at \$1,450 and \$1,550.

New-car dealers agreed that prices, for both new and used cars, are

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

likely to break—but none could guess when the drop might take place. Speculation as to strike possibilities, steel and other material shortages, and the continued impact of buying power are factors likely to affect any general decreases for cars. However, several salesmen said that the local price levels are mirrored throughout the middle west, so no immediate break is considered likely.

—Champaign-Urbana (Ill.) *Courier*

### *Reporters check meat prices in ten cities; lead indicates national trend*

Meat prices have continued upward since the CIO packinghouse workers ended their strike May 24 but in most cases the increase has been slight, a nation-wide survey in 10 cities showed today.

Experts in various cities differed, however, as to the reason for the continued increase. Many had predicted that the strike's end would bring more abundant and cheaper meat to the nation's dinner tables.

Today's survey as compared with that of May 21, before the strike ended:

Round steak (per pound)	86.8 cents	90.8 cents
Bacon	74.3	77.4
Sirloin	87.0	91.9
Hamburger	52.4	55.6
T-Bone	92.0	97.0

The two biggest increases were at St. Louis and Detroit. Prices in those two cities appeared to have risen almost 10 cents a pound on each cut.

Several cities, such as Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Chicago, reported no increases. Prices dropped on some cuts at Los Angeles and Atlanta. At Los Angeles, round steak dropped from 99 to 97 cents and sirloin from 99 to 95. Round steak dropped from 75 to 69 cents a pound at Los Angeles.

A Minneapolis meat dealer said the rising market was "definitely continuing" but that he didn't expect prices there to rise 10 cents.

Spokesmen for the National Association of Retail Meat Dealers did not believe the price rise was general. Executive Secretary George Dressler said, however, that such a general increase may come soon.

"Many retailers absorbed a steady wholesale price rise themselves, during the packing strike in hopes that prices eventually would break,"

he said. "Since prices haven't broken, the retailers may now decide to pass some of the burden on to the consumers."

Dressler said also that a price rise is normal for this time of year due to seasonal drop in supplies. But, he said, the strike made matters worse by pushing livestock marketings ahead instead of spreading them out over the season.

—United Press

### **136. Campaigns**

Sometimes even one investigative news story that reveals a bad condition will result in action taken in an attempt to remedy the condition. A series of investigative stories which reveal various phases of a bad condition are often referred to as a "newspaper campaign." The campaign may be fostered by editorials and pictures as well as investigative news stories. If the purpose of the campaign is to bring about reform in areas where the legality of certain actions is being questioned, the reporter must proceed carefully. He must collect not only facts but legal evidence. He must find witnesses who are willing to testify in court if necessary.

Campaigns that lead to the destruction of individuals or institutions are justifiable only when they serve the public good. They should never be used by individual publishers as avenues to personal power. Nor by politicians as gateways to public office.

### **137. Gathering Facts**

The most important step in the preparation of an investigative news story is the gathering of information. Without information you have no story. The investigative reporter cannot sit like a spider in some dark corner and wait for his news to pass by within grabbing distance. Nor is he like the poet who composes lines to a lonely lady while he stares at the blank walls of his attic room. He cannot create a fact story from the deep wells of

his mind. The "creative" touch he gives to a story consists in the thoroughness with which he gathers information, the expertness with which he develops the story to bring out its significance, and the human interest he puts into the story by his choice of words.

Fact gathering should be done methodically. As mentioned before, list all of the possible sources of information. Don't try to remember the list. Write it down somewhere and check off the sources after they have been covered. Make a thorough check of printed information available in local libraries, government offices, etc., before you start your interviews. You will be embarrassed if an interviewee tells you that the answer to one of your questions is in "Who's Who." What he means is that you are taking up his time with questions you could have answered yourself with five minutes of research.

For further information about fact gathering, see Chapter Two, "Working with News Sources."

### **138. Filing Facts**

Information for an investigative story should be put on cards or sheets of loose-leaf note paper as it is gathered. Then the cards or sheets of paper can be shifted around in order to organize the story facts before the story is written. The system for filing this material should be simple. Standard filing cabinet cardboard folders are recommended. These folders will hold 8-by-10 photographs, newspaper clippings, standard-sized typing paper, and other materials which the reporter might gather over a period of several days or weeks before he writes his story.

### **139. Writing the Story**

Before writing his story the reporter should carefully read his notes and then put them aside. He should write his story with-



out reference to the notes. When he has finished, however, he should check the story with his notes for accuracy. This kind of technique makes for smoother writing. Continued reference to notes during the writing process often shows up in a jerky style.

Since the investigative story is often made up of combustible or controversial material, it must be absolutely clear to all readers. It must not be misunderstood. Therefore, readability becomes a prime requisite. You are referred to the readability principles listed in Chapter One of this book. Also you are referred to the stories of James Marlow of the *Associated Press*. The "Marlow" readability style is clearly indicated in the following examples.

#### EXAMPLES

##### *Investigation and explanation of the cost of living in the U. S.*

WASHINGTON, April 9—(AP)—Here's where you come in on all this talk about high prices.

Your cost of living has gone up 53 per cent since 1939.

That's why every housewife knows the meaning behind President Truman's appeals to businessmen to cut prices.

The President is so worried about prices now that he called a special cabinet meeting today to talk about them.

He has reason to be worried. So do you. We're having a real inflation, you may not like the word. But that's it.

You may not like to hear this, either, but it is what's beginning to scare some businessmen and government officials:

Unless prices start coming down we may have a "recession." That's a pretty word, "recession." It's fancy for "depression."

This will show you just how real the inflation is by showing you what happened to your living costs since World War II started in August, 1939.

Between August, 1939, and June, 1946, the cost of living rose 33 per cent.

In the next eight months—between June, 1946, and February, 1947—living costs jumped another 20 per cent, or 53 percent above August, 1939.

Living costs hit that 53 per cent mark last December. They've stayed there. They're there now.

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

Why the terrific jump between June, 1946, and February, 1947? Because in that time OPA all but died and almost all price controls went out the window.

Business jacked up their prices and they've kept them there.

This isn't true of all businessmen. Ford, Plymouth, International Harvester and some others—but not many—have cut prices in an attempt to get other businessmen to follow them.

Few have followed. Last Saturday President Truman asked businessmen not to "go whole hog for profits."

He said that if they don't stop being hungry for profits, this will happen:

People will stop buying. Which will mean business will have to cut down on the amount of goods it produces. In turn, that will mean men thrown out of jobs. Then we'll have the recession.

### *A-B-C explanation of a strike situation, clear and readable*

WASHINGTON, April 2—(AP)—This is an ABC on John L. Lewis and the coal strike.

There are two main points:

1. The cause of the strike—Lewis and the mine owners can't agree on what miners should get a pension.

2. Stopping the strike—President Truman is trying to figure this out now.

Take the first one: What miners are entitled to a pension?

Last July Lewis' coal miners went to work for the mine owners under a contract that was to end next June 30.

In this contract the owners agreed to turn 10 cents, from every ton of coal mined, into a welfare fund for the miners.

The miners were to get a number of benefits from this fund—it has grown to 32 million dollars since last July—and one of them was a pension.

From last July till mid-March, 1948, Lewis and the owners argued about who should get a pension. This is what Lewis wanted:

A \$100 a month pension for every man who was 60 years old, had worked 20 years in the mines, and was a member of Lewis' United Mine Workers' Union.

He wanted this to cover miners—60 years old and with 20 years in the mines—who quit even before the new contract started July 1.

The owners argued that the only miners entitled to a pension were

those who were working on or after July 1 when the contract went into effect.

In mid-March, after all the months of argument, the miners quit. Lewis says they're not striking. He points to a clause in their contract which says they'll work only when "willing and able."

Since they're not working, Lewis wants it understood they're just not "willing" but, because of the clause in the contract, are not violating the contract.

Now take the second point: How to stop it?

Under the Taft-Hartley Labor Law, when there's a big strike in a big industry the President can decide there's a national emergency.

Then he can set up a board of fact-finders to look into the dispute. He did that in this case.

The law says such fact-finders, when they've finished their check, must report the facts to the President. He, in turn, must make the report public.

The fact-finders in the coal case made their report to the President, but he delayed making it public right away.

After getting this report, the law says, the President "may" tell the attorney general to ask a federal judge for an injunction, or a court order, to stop the big strike for 80 days.

Why 80 days? To give both sides in the dispute that much more time to reach an agreement and thus, maybe, save the nation from the effects of a big strike.

At the end of 80 days, if still there was no agreement, the workers could strike again.

Instead of making the fact-finders' report public right a way or asking for a court order to stop the strike, Mr. Truman delayed doing both and held conferences with his advisers.

Why? Probably to see if they could think of some way to get both sides to reach a settlement without that last resort, a court order not to strike.

But could the government get a court order in this case since the miners argue they're not striking but are merely not "willing" to work and have not violated a contract?

One of the most expert lawyers on the Taft-Hartley Law says "yes," that a no-strike order could be issued in this case. He said a judge could do this:

Order Lewis—and his union, made up of all his miners—to go back

## *The Modern Reporter's Handbook*

to work. If Lewis refused, he could be jailed and fined. But what if the almost 400,000 miners refused?

The same expert said the judge could fine their union so many millions of dollars he'd wipe out every cent in their treasury.

That's just one man's opinion. It would be up to a federal judge to decide whether he could issue a no-strike order.

It's possible Mr. Truman may decide the Taft-Hartley Law doesn't cover the case and be unwilling to ask for a court injunction. What then?

Congress might decide, if the strike continued, to pass a fast law to compel the miners to go back to work.

### *Investigation of what it means for the government to seize the railroads*

WASHINGTON, May 11—(AP)—What happens when the government takes over the nation's railroads?

Nothing, really, unless there's a strike or trouble. In that case, the government actually steps in.

Otherwise, it just sits back and lets the railroad companies run the trains just as they did before the government took over.

If the workers stay on the job and keep the trains going till their dispute with the railroads is settled—which is what they're doing—everything goes on as before.

The President—as in the present case—just issues an order saying the government is seizing the roads.

Then he appoints someone—in this case the Army in the person of Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall—to be the railroad boss.

As soon as Royall was appointed he handed the job over to Maj. Gen. Edmond H. Leavey, the Army's top transportation man.

What about the money the railroads collect while the government has the roads? Who gets that? The railroads, just as before. Mr. Truman's order said that should be done.

Who pays the workers while the government has the roads? The railroad companies, just as before.

If there is a strike, then the government takes an active hand.

The government could hardly try to run the nation's railroad system with troops. They don't know enough about railroading.

In short—unless there's a strike or trouble—government seizure of the railroads is hardly more than an order on a piece of paper.

This is the fourth time in thirty years that the government has seized the railroads. It did it in 1918, in 1943, and again in 1946.

The government took over yesterday 18 hours before the strike was due to start. As a result, it never did start. The workers agreed to obey a court order and stay on the job.

In 1946 workers struck, though the government had taken over the road six days before.

The strike was broken and the men went back to work when President Truman asked Congress to pass a law drafting the strikers into the Army.

In 1943 there was no strike—but the workers and the railroads couldn't agree on a wage raise.

Just before Christmas that year President Roosevelt ordered the government to take over the roads. It held them until mid-January, 1944.

During the government seizure the workers ran the trains until they reached an agreement with the railroads. Then the government got out.

In both those cases—1943 and 1946—government seizure was really no more than a seizure in name.

The railroad companies had full possession of their properties.

It was different in 1918. That was during World War I. There was danger the whole railroad system would break down.

From Jan. 1, 1918, until March 15, 1920, the government took over the roads.

In that seizure the government took a very active hand in the operation of the roads.

It poured new equipment into the railroad system and hired many thousands of extra workers.

President Woodrow Wilson ordered that seizure. And the job of bossing the roads was given to William McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury.

The government lost money on that deal. It had guaranteed the railroads a fixed income while the government ran the roads.

It cost the government about \$1,500,000,000 in money it spent on equipment and money it had to pay the roads.

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Policies of the** \_\_\_\_\_



**Special word usage on the** \_\_\_\_\_  
(your newspaper)



# Index

## A

Abduction, 119  
 Abortion, 98  
 Accessories, 369  
 Accidents, air, 151-154  
   asphyxiation, 172-174  
   automobile, 154-158  
   drowning, 161-163  
   electrocution, 172, 173  
   explosion, 169  
   fire, 150, 151  
   industrial, 162, 163  
   marine, 167, 168  
   mine, 169-172  
   railroad, 164-167  
   shooting, 168, 169  
 Adjectives, 14, 15  
 Advertising in news, 66  
 Affirm, 369  
 Agenda, 328  
 Air accidents, 151-154  
 Allocation of funds, 302, 303  
 Amendment, 328  
*American Jurisprudence*, 29, 31, 32,  
   34, 362, 363  
 Appeal, 369  
 Appellant, 369  
 Appellate decisions, 354, 355  
 Appellee, 369  
 Arraignment, 369  
 Arrests, when made, 345  
 Arson, 114, 115  
 Art exhibits, 228-232  
 Arts, reporting the, 220-237  
 Asphyxiations, 172-174  
 Assault, and battery, 104, 105, 369  
   with deadly weapon, 104, 106,  
   107  
   with intent to kill, 104-106  
 Assets, 286

*Associated Press*, 9, 18, 19, 20, 71,  
   84, 122, 123, 146, 183, 184,  
   191, 206, 269, 270, 271, 348,  
   353, 354, 355, 357, 397, 398,  
   399, 400, 401  
*Associated Press Reference Book*, 9,  
   146  
*Atlanta Journal*, 279  
 Attachment, 370  
 Attempted rape, 90-93  
 Attempted suicide, 178-181  
 Audit, 286  
 Authority in the news, delayed, 68  
   how used, 67-70  
   implied, 69, 70  
   in leads, 67, 68  
   official, 67  
 Automobile accidents, proper word  
   usage, 154-156  
   reporting of, 154-158  
 Automobile production, 276

## B

"Bad check artists," 111, 112  
 Balanced budget, 286  
 Bank debits, 286  
 Bank statements, 271-273  
 Bankruptcy, 286  
 Bastardy proceedings, 95-97  
 Battery, 104, 105, 369  
   *See also* Assault  
*Beacon News*, 50-52  
 Bear, 286  
 Beat reporting, 50-52  
 Beaufort wind scale, 160  
 Bench warrant, 370  
 Bequests, 346  
 Biennium budget, 286  
 Bigamy, 98, 99

## Index

Bill of particulars, 370  
Binghamton Press, 144  
Births, 189  
Blackmail, 119, 120  
Blizzards, 159  
Bloomington *Pantagraph*, 43  
Bond, bail, 370  
    negotiable, 286  
    peace, 374  
Bond called for redemption, 287  
Book reports, 220-223  
Brooklyn *Eagle*, 180  
Budget, 242-247, 287  
Buffalo *Courier-Express*, 143  
Buffalo *Evening News*, 143  
Building restrictions, 303  
Bull, 287  
Business failures, 277  
Business journals, 270, 271  
Business reports, 263-268

## C

Campaigns, 395  
*Canadian Press*, 143  
Challenge for cause, 370  
Chambers of commerce, 273, 274  
Champaign-Urbana *Evening Courier*, 232, 256, 394  
Champaign-Urbana *News Gazette*, 226, 228, 261  
Change of venue, 370  
Charge to the jury, 370  
Chicago *Daily News*, 222  
Chicago *Herald-American*, 206  
Chicago *Sun*, 206  
Chicago *Times*, 206  
Chicago *Tribune*, 207, 237, 367  
Children, abandonment of, 134-137  
    sale of, 134, 135  
Children's court act, 131  
*Christian Science Monitor*, 21, 22, 206, 247, 268, 308, 314, 391  
Church titles, Catholic, 72, 73  
    Episcopal, 73, 74  
    handling of, 72-75  
    other Protestant, 74, 75  
City council, business of, 297, 298  
    reporting of, 298-300  
City manager plan, 328  
City planning, 303, 304  
Civil actions, 345, 346  
Clearings, 287  
Clinics, 189  
Codicil, 370  
Commercial paper, 287  
Commission plan, 328  
Commodity markets, 287  
Common stock, 287  
Complainant, 374  
Concerts, 223-228  
Confessions, policies for handling, 123, 124  
Connelly, Gordon M., quoted, 283, 284  
Contagious diseases, 191-193  
Contempt of court, 367, 368, 371  
Continuance, 371  
Continuous-action leads, 84, 85  
Contract delivery, 287  
Conventions, reporting of, 212  
Coroner, authority of, 359  
Coroner's jury, decisions of, 360-362  
    duties of, 359, 362  
Counterfeiting, 120, 121  
County commission meetings, 326  
County government, boards, 326, 327  
    business of, 324-327  
    commissioners, 324-326  
    supervisors, 324-326  
    trustees, 324-326  
Court, decisions, 351, 352, 358  
    friend of, 372  
    orders, 352-354  
    reporting, 18, 19, 344, 368, 369  
    verdicts, 351, 352  
Court of record, 371  
Court reporting, handling of, 18, 19, 344  
    restrictions on, 368, 369  
Crime, by automobile, 100  
    news stories of, 90  
    prevention of, 121, 122  
    story terminology, 108  
    waves, 108  
Criminals, rehabilitation of, 122, 123

Cub reporters, 50, 51  
Cyclone, defined, 159

## D

Danville *Commercial News*, 180  
Death stories, reporting of, 182-187  
terminology, 183  
Debates, 208  
Debt service, 287  
Defacement of public property,  
114-116  
Defendant, 371  
Defendant in error, 374  
Deficiency appropriation, 287  
Deficit, 288  
Demurrer, 371  
Deposition, 371  
Depreciation, 288  
Detroit *News*, 95, 345  
Destruction of property, 104  
Dictionary for reporters, 406-419  
Diplomatic correspondence, inspec-  
tion of, 31  
Directed verdict, 371  
Disorderly conduct, 103-105  
Disturbance of the peace, 103  
Dividends, 288  
Divorce proceedings, humor in, 365,  
366  
reporting of, 364-367  
Doe, John, 373  
Drainage, 314-316  
Drownings, 161-163  
Drummond, Roscoe, 22  
Drunken driving, 100, 101, 103  
Drunkennes, 104

## E

Earmarked funds, 328  
Earthquakes, 159, 161  
Easement, 372  
*Editor & Publisher*, 22, 37, 265, 368  
Election results, 251-255  
Electrocutions, 172, 173  
Embezzlement, 111-113  
Embracery, 372  
Eminent domain, 328

Enabling laws, 329  
Epidemics, 191-193  
Equity, courts of, 372  
Evjue, W. T., 91  
Explosions, 169  
Extortion, 119, 120  
Extraditions, 372

## F

Facts, filing, 396  
gathering, 395, 396  
False statements from news sources,  
38, 39  
Fee office, 329  
Felony, 372  
Financial statements, 247-251  
Financial stories, 265  
Fire protection, 302-306  
Fires, reporting of, 150, 151  
terminology, 150, 151  
Fiscal year, 288  
Five w's, 3, 4, 8  
Flesch, Rudolf, 24  
Floods, 159, 161  
"Fog index," 23  
Forgery, 111  
Formal surveys, 385-387  
Forums, 207, 208  
Franchise, 329  
Free publicity, 43, 44, 49, 50  
Freeholder, 329  
Freeman, C. A. S., speech by, 4-7  
Freight loadings, 276, 288  
Frozen assets, 288  
Funeral stories, 184, 185, 187, 188  
Future book for reporter, 50  
Futures, 288

## G

Gambling, 104  
Gannett newspapers, 145  
Government finance, 300-302  
Government reports, 274-276, 294-  
296  
Grand juries, duties of, 362, 363  
reporting, 362-364

## Index

Grand juries (Cont.)  
  right to see minutes of, 31  
  secrecy concerning, 363, 364  
Gross income, 288

## H

Hail, 159  
Handouts, 49, 50, 309  
Hartford *Courant*, 62  
Health department records, 31  
Highways, 316-318  
Hit-and-run driving, 100, 102, 103  
Homicide, definition, 372  
  as felony, 117  
  stories of, 117-119  
  terminology, 118, 119  
Hospital news, kinds, 188-190  
  policies, 189-191  
  reporting of, 188-191  
*How to Write the News Today*, 81  
Hurricanes, 159, 160

## I

Illegal nursing homes, 134-136  
Illegitimacy, 95-97  
Illness stories, unusual, 189  
Imposters, 113, 114  
Income tax, 261-263  
Incorporated areas, 329  
Incumbents, 329  
Indecent exposure, 97, 98  
Identification, overuse of, 61  
  by race, 62-64  
  by religion, 75  
  "stressed use of," 62-64  
  treatment in news, 56, 57  
  of veterans, 64, 65  
Indianapolis *Star*, 128  
Indianapolis *Times*, 179  
Indigents, 329  
Industrial accidents, 162-164  
Informal surveys, 387-395  
Information, 373  
Injunction, 373  
Inquests, reporting of, 358-360  
Insolvent, 288  
Inspection of public records, 28-31

**426**

Interlocutory decree, 373  
*International News Service*, 10, 81, 82  
Interpretation, 2, 3, 16, 22, 23, 221, 248, 249  
Interviews, first part of, 47  
  how to conduct, 46-48  
  preparation for, 46, 47  
  second part of, 47  
  third part of, 47-48  
Intestate, 375  
Intoxication, 104  
Investigative stories, filing facts for, 396  
  gathering facts for, 395, 396  
  writing of, 382, 396, 397  
Investment, 288

## J

Jackson *Citizen Patriot*, 65  
Judicial records, 29  
Jurisdiction, 373  
Juvenile delinquency, arrest stories, 129, 130  
  court stories, 131, 132  
  reporting of, 114, 115, 128-133  
  terminology, 133

## K

Kidnaping, 119

## L

Landslides, 159  
Larceny, 107-110, 373  
Leads, continuous action in, 84, 85  
  length of, 10, 11  
  present tense in, 84, 85  
  time element in, 81-84  
  for trial stories, 348, 349  
  writing of, 10, 11, 15, 20-23  
Liabilities, 288  
Libel in a nutshell, 145  
Libel, safeguards against, 142-146  
Lie detectors, 124  
*Life*, 365

Lightning, 159  
 Liquid assets, 288  
 Literature, reporting of, 220-223  
*Living Church Annual, The*, 74  
 Longs, 288

## M

Madison *Capital Times*, 91  
 "Making the News Stick," 4-7  
 Malicious mischief, 104  
 Mandate, 373  
 Mandatory expense, 288  
 Manslaughter, 116, 117, 374  
 Marine accidents, 167, 168  
 Markel, Lester, 22  
 Markets, reporting of, 268-270  
 Marlow, James, stories by, 18, 355, 356, 397-401  
 Mayhem, 373  
 Mayor-council plan, 329  
 Medical cures, 194-196  
 Medical discoveries, 188, 194-196  
 Medical freaks, 199, 200  
 Medical leads, 194, 195  
 Medical societies, 200  
 Medical stories, 194, 195  
 Meetings, advance reporting, 213-214  
     conventions, 212  
     follow-ups, 213  
 Miami *Daily News*, 21  
*Milwaukee Journal*, 16, 21, 49  
 Mine accidents, 169-172  
 Minneapolis *Star*, 283  
 Minneapolis *Tribune*, 179, 392  
 Minors, contributing to delinquency of, 133, 134  
 Misdemeanor, 373  
 Mistrial, 374  
 Mobile *Press Register*, 179  
 Motor vehicle regulations, 101, 102  
 Movies, 235-237  
 Murder, 116-118, 374

## N

Names in news, 56-58  
 Natural disasters, blizzards, 159

do's and don't's, 159  
 earthquakes, 159-161  
 floods, 159-161  
 hail, 159  
 hurricanes, 159, 160  
 landslides, 159  
 lightning, 159  
 tidal waves, 159, 161  
 tornadoes, 159, 160  
 windstorms, 159, 160  
 "Nee," how to use, 57, 58  
 Net expense, 289  
 Net income, 289  
 Net working capital, 289  
 New Bedford *Standard Times*, 42, 144  
*New Yorker, The*, 36  
*Newburgh News*, 4  
*New Orleans Times Picayune*, 65  
 News, advertising in, 66  
     approval by news source, 40, 41  
     innocent parties in, 36  
     interpretation of, 2, 3, 16, 22, 23, 221, 248, 249  
     language of, 13, 14  
     leads, 4, 7, 11, 61  
     names in, 56-58  
     paragraph length, 11  
     qualification of, 70-72  
     right to get, 28  
     sentence length, 11  
     sentence structure, 11-13  
     source handling, 48, 49  
     suppression, 39, 40  
     understanding of, 4-7  
     writing of, 12, 13  
 News-gathering rights, 28  
 News letters, 211  
*News on the Air*, 3  
 News sources, bank statements, 271-273  
     business journals, 270-271  
     chambers of commerce, 273-274  
     confidential information from, 42-43  
     false statements by, 38, 39  
     government reports, 274-276, 294-296  
     incorrect quotations, 44, 45

## Index

### News sources (Cont.)

- medical societies, 200
- "not available for comment," 45
- protection of, 37, 38
- special requests by, 40-42
- taking sides with, 46
- working with, 28-54
- Newsweek*, 11, 13, 14
- New York Daily News*, 8
- New York Times*, 15, 21, 22, 62
- New York World Telegram*, 144
- No true bill, 364, 376
- Nolle prosequi, 374
- Nonrecurring profit, 289
- Notes, taking of, 218

### O

- Obiter dictum, 374
- Obituaries, 182
- Official Catholic Directory*, 72
- Official statements, 211, 212
- Off-the-record remarks, 42, 43, 214
- Oil and Gas Journal*, 270
- Operations, rare, 189
- Opinions, 374
- Ordinances, 330

### P

- Parity, 289
- Past tense, use of, 85
- Pawnbroker's records, inspection of, 31
- Peeping Toms, 97, 98
- Pegged levy, 329
- Pensacola News*, 179
- Peremptory challenge, 374
- Perjury, 374
- Plain talk, 344
- Plaintiff, 374
- Plaintiff in error, 374
- Plats, 329
- Plea in abatement, 375
- Pleadings, 374
- Police protection, 304-308
- Police records, inspection of, 31
- Polls, 382-385
- Preferred stock, 289

- Presentment, 375
- Pre-trial reporting, restrictions on, 368, 369
- Pre-trial stories, 344, 345
- Price index, 277
- Price pegging, 289
- Printer's Ink*, 270
- Probate, 375
- Proclamations, 211, 212
- Proctor, Roy, 91
- Profits, reporting of, 265, 266
- Property, 330
- Prostitution, 94, 95, 104
- Protective wording, 71, 72
- Providence Journal*, 66
- Prowlers, 97, 98
- Public health, 196, 199
- Public records, definition of, 32, 33
- inspection of, 28-31
- Public relations officers, working with, 49, 50
- Publicity material, 43, 44, 49, 50

### Q

- Qualification of news, 70-72
- Quash indictment, 375
- Questions by reporter, 49
- Quotes, handling of, 214-216

### R

- Racial identification, 62-64
- Railroad accidents, 164-167
- Rape, 90-93
- Rare operations, 189
- Readability, 4, 9, 13, 23, 24, 56, 221
- Recitals, 223-228
- Reckless driving, 101
- Referendum, 330
- Re-plats, 329
- Replevin, 375
- Reporter's dictionary, 406-419
- Reporter's future book, 50
- Reserve, 289
- Resisting arrest, 104
- Resolutions, 211
- Respondent, 375



Right of privacy, court cases covering, 34, 35  
 definition of, 33, 34  
 innocent parties, 36, 37  
 and libel, 34  
 and public figures, 35  
 relational type, 37  
 reporter's responsibility, 37  
 waiving of, 35  
 Roe, Mary, 373  
 Roundup stories, 387-391

## S

Sacramento *Bee*, 95  
 St. Louis *Post Dispatch*, 279, 280, 286  
 St. Paul *Dispatch*, 40, 62, 189, 365  
 St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, 40, 62, 189, 365  
 Sanitation, 196, 198, 314-316  
 Schools, districts, 319-322  
   reporting of, 320-324  
 Science reporting, 16-18  
 Security markets, 289  
 Sentence, concurrent, 371  
   deferred, 371  
   indeterminate, 372  
   suspended, 375  
 Sentence lengths, 11  
 Severance, motion for, 374  
 "Shield" laws, 37  
 Shootings, 168, 169  
 Shoplifting, 100  
 Shorts, 289  
 Sidis, William James, 36  
 Sinking fund, 289  
 Smith, Willard R., 49  
 Smuggling, 120, 121  
 Social welfare, reporting of, 309-314  
   scope of, 309-314  
 Special assessments, 330  
 Special districts, election, 319, 320  
   service, 319, 320  
 Special legislation, 330  
 Speeches, advance story of, 205  
   distortion of, 204, 205  
   examples of, 208-211

  leads, 206, 207  
   reporting of, 204-211  
   terminology, 207  
 Speeding, 101, 103  
 Sports statistics, 283, 285  
 Springfield *Republican*, 182  
 Stage productions, 232-234  
 State's evidence, 375  
 Statistics, business, 276  
   feature treatment of, 280-283  
   sports, 283-285  
 Stay of execution, 375  
 Steel, 270  
 Steel output, 276  
 Steigleman, Walter, 37  
 Streets, 316-318  
 Style, newspaper news, 9  
   radio news, 9  
 Subornation, 375  
 Subpoena, 375  
 Subpoena *duces tecum*, 375  
 Suicide, 178-181

## T

Tampa *Morning Tribune*, 179  
 Tax allocations, 330  
 Tax anticipation warrants, 301  
 Tax delinquency, 330  
 Taxes, complaints, 261  
   income, 261-263  
   levies, 255, 256  
   rates, 255, 256  
   reporting of, 255-261  
 Tense, use of past, 85  
 Testate, 375  
 Testimony, handling of, 348-350  
 Theatre, 232-234  
 Tidal waves, 159, 161  
 Time element, in advance stories, 81  
   at deadline, 83  
   expressions to avoid, 82-84  
   in follow-ups, 81  
   in leads, 81-84  
   in news, 80  
 Time loans, 289  
 Tornadoes, 159, 160  
 Township government, 318, 319

## *Index*

Traffic violations, 100, 101  
Trial stories, 347, 348  
True bill, 364, 376  
Truth serums, 124  
Twain, Mark, 15

### U

*United Press*, 22, 112, 113, 187, 188,  
195, 206, 208-211, 386, 387,  
394, 395

### V

Vagrancy, 104  
Valuation, actual, 330  
    assessed, 255, 256, 330  
Vandalism, 114-116  
Veniremen, 376  
Verbs, 14, 15  
Veterans, identification of, 64, 65  
Visual education, 19

### W

*Ward's Automotive Reports*, 276  
Warrants, as checks, 331  
    service of, 344  
    tax anticipation, 301  
*Waterbury Republican*, 45, 80, 144  
*Waterloo Daily Courier*, 128, 179  
Waves, tidal, 159, 161  
Weather data, 277, 278, 279  
White, Paul W., 3  
Wills, 346, 347  
Windstorms, 159, 160  
*Worcester Telegram*, 100, 179  
Word pictures, 19-21  
Words, correct usage of, 406-419  
Writ of habeas corpus, 376  
Writ of mandamus, 376

### Z

Zoning, 303, 304, 331









